

INTERMEDIATE POETRY SELECTIONS

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

A text-book of poetry, unlike one of prose, is ordinarily intended to help students to an understanding and appreciation of ideas, as against a mere knowledge of facts. A selection of poems representing all the rich variety of form and treatment through the entire range of English poetry would be a futile task. Therefore, all that can be done, is to bring within the reach of the student a selection of passages which will familiarise him, step by step, with some of the best and most strongly representative writers of English poetry. It is, therefore, intended to include here only such poems as will enable the student, at the Intermediate stage, to establish a closer, and perhaps a more pleasant, touch with those poets who have so largely helped to make and enrich the poetry of England. These selections should help him over the stile into a more open country, where his horizon will not be so rigidly bound by mere mechanical application for examination purposes, as a set of poems which are to be 'prepared' as a task usually do; but by including here many more poems than will be necessary for him to study for one examination, the student, as he progresses, will develop at least a desire, if not real taste, for going further afield than the usual 'prescribed course.'

These selections, which include poems ranging from Shakespeare to our own times, will, it is hoped, enable the student to trace the stages leading to the making of English poetry down through the centuries—The Elizabethans; the XVIII Century poets; the Romanticists; the Victorians and the Moderns. Thus there will grow upon

him some sense of the relationship between an age and its poetry. He will also be able to differentiate between the various verse patterns, both Stanzaic and in Blank Verse. A careful study of the poems will further acquaint him with some of the characteristic and typical forms of poetry, e.g., the ballad, the lyric, the sonnet, the ode, the elegy, the narrative poem, etc.

While the contribution of Englishmen to the poetry of their land is rich and large, yet the West, especially in recent times, has often been indebted to the East for inspiration, and, therefore, in these Selections the student will be interested to find poems about India by Englishmen, as also by Indians, whose names are known beyond the borders of our country, writing in the English tongue. The study of such poems with an Indian background and interest, will suggest a parallel or a contrast between the Western and the Oriental points of view.

Writers of recent English poetry included here are represented by names which have secured an abiding place among English poets. Thus the poems of our own time should enable the student to realise that poetry is a growing and living phenomenon, and not merely a product of the idle and antiquated past.

Though the Intermediate student is not expected to know much about the complexity of English metrical forms, it would certainly tend to an increased understanding and pleasure of a poem, if, with the help of his teacher, the student can make himself familiar with some of the elementary rules of verse construction. The teacher can make himself further useful, if, while drawing the attention of the student to the meaning and appeal of a poem, he can throw some light on the poet's life, thus correlating for the student the life and poetry of a writer,

and providing him with the necessary background and correct perspective for an interesting study. Such anecdotes from a poet's life as may reveal some of the springs from which his work arose, without unnecessarily burdening the student with too many biographical details, will, perhaps, not fail to rouse the interest of the student, and lead him to other poems of the writer, which for obvious reasons cannot be included in this selection.

AGRA, 10-4-44.

C. MAHAJAN

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I

BLOW, BLOW, THOU WINTER WIND

Blow, blow thou winter wind,

Thou art not so unkind.

As man's ingratitude;

Thy tooth is not so keen,

Because thou art not seen,

Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

Then, heigh-ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly.

10

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,

That dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot:

Though thou the waters warp,

Thy sting is not so sharp

15

As friend remember'd not.

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

Then, heigh-ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly.

W. SHAKESPEARE

II

THE QUALITY OF MERCY

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes

15

The throned monarch better than his crown;
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway; 10.
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself;
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
 Though justice be thy plea, consider this, 15.
 That, in the course of justice, none of us
 Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
 The deeds of mercy.

W. SHAKESPEARE

"LET ME NOT TO THE MARRIAGE OF
 TRUE MINDS"

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:

O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

12

If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

14

No. 22. See Mr. Johnson. SHAKESPEARE

IV

THE NOBLE NATURE

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk, doth make men better be;
 Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
 To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:

5

A lily of a day

Is fairer far in May,

Although it fall and die that night—

It was the plant and flower of light.

In small proportions we great beauties see;
 And in short measures life may perfect be.

10

BEN JONSON

✓ V

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF
 TWENTY-THREE.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
 Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
 My hastening days fly on with full career,
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth.

5

That I to manhood am arrived so near;
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
 That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow, C.
 It shall be still in strictest measure even
 To that same lot, however mean or high,
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

J. MILTON

(1608-1674)

VI

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED
TO THE CITY

Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
 Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
 If deed of honour did thee ever please,
 Guard them, and him within protect from harms,
 He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
 That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
 And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
 Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
 Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
 The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
 Went to the ground; and the repeated air
 Of sad Electra's poet had the power
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

J. MILTON

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd;
Dear, lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made;
How often have I bless'd the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd; 20
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;
And still, as each repeated pleasure tir'd,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown, 25
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter titter'd round the place;
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove. 30

6 INTERMEDIATE POETRY SELECTIONS

These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,
With sweet succession taught e'en toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms—But all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn, 35
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn:
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain: 40
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But chok'd with sedges works its weedy way.
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies, 45
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries
Sunk are thy bowers, in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'er tops the mouldering wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land. 50

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride, 55
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;
For him light Labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life requir'd, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health; 60
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth

But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbersome pomp repose; 65
And every want to luxury allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that ask'd but little room, 70
Those healthful sports that grac'd the peaceful scene,
Liv'd in each look, and brighten'd all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour, 75
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power
Here as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruin'd grounds,
And many a year elaps'd, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew, 80
Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.
In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown, 85
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
midst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill, 90
round my fire an evening group to draw,
and tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
and, as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
ants to the place from whence at first she flew,
still had hopes, my long vexations pass'd,
here to return—and die at home at last. 95

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
 Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
 How blest is he who crowns in shades like these,
 A youth of labour with an age of ease; 100
 Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
 And, since 'tis hard to combat learns to fly!
 For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
 Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
 No surly porter stands, in guilty state, 105
 To spurn imploring famine from the gate:
 But on he moves to meet his latter end.
 Angels around befriending Virtue's friend:
 Bends to the grave with unpeiceiv'd decay,
 While Resignation gently slopes the way; 110
 And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
 His Heaven commences ere the world be pass'd

Sweet was the sound, when oft, at evening's close
 Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
 There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow, 115
 The mingling notes came soften'd from below;
 The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
 The sober herd that low'd to meet their young;
 The noisy geese that gabbed o'er the pool,
 The playful children just let loose from school; 120
 The watch-dog's voice, that bay'd the whisp'ring wind,
 And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind;
 These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
 And fill'd each pause the nightingale had made.

But now the sounds of population fail,
 No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale, 125
 No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
 But all the blooming flush of life is fled
 All but yon widow'd, solitary thing,
 That feebly bends beside the plashy spring; 130

She, wretched matron! forc'd, in age, for bread,
 To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
 To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
 To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn;
 She only left of all the harmless train, 135
 The sad historian of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose. 140
 A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change his place;
 Unpractis'd he to fawn, or seek for power, 145
 By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
 Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
 More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.
 His house was known to all the vagrant train,
 He chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain, 150
 The long remember'd beggar was his guest,
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
 The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
 Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay, 155
 Sat by his fire, and talk'd the night away;
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
 Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were won.
 Pleas'd with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe; 160
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
 His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
 And e'en his failings lean'd to Virtue's side;
 But in his duty prompt at every call, 165

He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all.
 And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
 To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
 He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
 Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

170

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
 And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd,
 The reverend champion stood. At his control,
 Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
 Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,

175

And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
 His looks adorn'd the venerable place; (16.)
 Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
 And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray. 180
 The service pass'd, around the pious man,
 With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran:
 E'en children follow'd, with endearing wile,
 And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's smile.
 His ready smile a parent's warmth express'd, 185
 Their welfare pleased him, and their care distress'd;
 To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
 But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
 As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm, 190
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

195

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
 With blossom'd furze, unprofitably gay,
 There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
 The village master taught his little school;
 A man severe he was, and stern to view;

195

I knew him well, and every truant knew;

Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face; 200
 Full well they laugh'd, with counterfeited glee,
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
 Full well the busy whisper, circling round, /
 Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd;
 Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught, 205
 The love he bore to learning was in fault; /
 The village all declared how much he knew;
 Twas certain he could write, and cipher too,
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
 And e'en the story ran that he could gauge: 210
 In arguing too, the parson own'd his skill,
 For e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still;
 While words of learned length and thundering sound
 Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around;
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew, 215
 That one small head could carry all he knew.

But pass'd is all his fame. The very spot, /
 Where many a time he triumph'd, is forgot. /
 Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
 Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye, 220
 Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspir'd,
 Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retir'd,
 Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound,
 And news much older than their ale went round.
 Imagination fondly stoops to trace 225
 The parlour splendours of that festive place,
 The white-wash'd wall, the nicely sanded floor,
 The varnish'd clock that click'd behind the door;
 The chest contriv'd a double debt to pay;
 Bed by night, a chest of drawers by day: 230
 The pictures plac'd for ornament and use,
 The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
 The hearth, except when winter chill'd the day,

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With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,
Rang'd o'er the chimney, glisten'd in a row.

235

Vain transitory splendours! could not all
Reprise the tottering mansion from its fall!
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart; 240
Thither no more the peasant shall repair,
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear, 245
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round:
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be press'd,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest. 250

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art; 225
Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, uninterrupted, unconfined,
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth array'd. 260
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, e'en while fashions brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?

Ye friends of truth, ye statesmen, who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay 265

"Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
 Between a splendid and a happy land.
 | Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
 And shouting Folly hails them from her shore; 270
 Hoards, e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
 And rich men flock from all the world around.
 Yet count our gains This wealth is but a name
 That leaves our useful products still the same.
 Not so the loss The man of wealth and pride 275
 Takes up a space that manly poor supplied;
 Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
 Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;
 The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
 Has robb'd the neighbouring fields of half their growth; 280
 His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
 Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;
 Around the world each needful product flies,
 For all the luxuries the world supplies;
 While thus the land, adorn'd for pleasure all, 285
 In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair and plain,
 Secure to please, is her reign,
 Slights every borrow'd charm that dress supplies,
 Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes; 290
 But when those charms are pass'd, for charms are frail,
 When time advances, and when lovers fail,
 She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
 In all the glaring impotence of dress. 295
 Thus fares the land, by luxury betray'd;
 In nature's simplest charms at first array'd:
 But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
 Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;
 While, scourg'd by famine, from the smiling land
 The mournful peasant leads his humble band; 300
 And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
 The country blooms—a garden, and a grave.

Where then, ah! where, shall poverty reside,
 To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride? 305
 If to some common's fenceless limits stray'd,
 He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
 Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
 And even the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped—What waits him there?

To see profusion that he must not share; 310
 To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
 To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;
 To see each joy the sons of pleasure know,
 Extorted from his fellow-creatures' woe.

Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
 There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
 Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display.
 There the black gibbet glooms beside the way;
 The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign,
 Here, richly deck'd, admits the gorgeous train; 320
 Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square:
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
 Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
 Sure these denote one universal joy!

Are these thy serious thoughts?—Ah, turn thine eyes 325
 Where the poor houseless shivering female lies:
 She once, perhaps, in village plenty bless'd,
 Has wept at tales of innocence distress'd;
 Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
 Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn; 330
 Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
 Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
 And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
 With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
 When idly first, ambitious of the town, 335
 She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

Do thine, Sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,
 Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
 E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
 At proud men's doors they ask a little bread! 340

Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
 Where half the convex world intrudes between,
 Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
 Where wild Altama murmur to their woe. 345
 Far different there from all that charm'd before,
 The various terrors of that horrid shore.
 Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
 And fiercely shed intolerable day;
 Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
 But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling; 350
 Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crown'd,
 Where the dark scorpion gathers death around:
 Where at each step the stranger fears to wake,
 The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
 Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey, 355
 And savage men more murderous still than they;
 While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
 Mingling the ravag'd landscape with the skies.
 Far different these from every former scene,
 The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green, 360
 The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
 That only shelter'd thefts of harmless love.

Good Heaven! what sorrows gloom'd that parting day,
 That call'd them from their native walks away;
 When the poor exiles, every pleasure pass'd,
 Hung round their bowers; and fondly look'd their last, 365
 And took a long farewell, and wish'd in vain
 For seats like these beyond the western main;
 And, shuddering still to face the distant deep,
 Retir'd and wept, and still remind'd to weep. 370

The good old sire the first prepar'd to go
 To new-found wólds, and wept for others' woe;
 But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
 He only wish'd for worlds beyond the grave.

His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears, 375

The fond companion of his helpless years,
 Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
 And left a lover's for her father's arms.

With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes.

And bless'd the cot where every pleasure rose; 380

And kiss'd her thoughtless babes 'with many a tear,

And clasp'd them close, in sorrow doubly dear;

Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief

In all the silent manliness of grief.

O luxury! thou curs'd by Heaven's decree, 385

How ill exchang'd are things like these for thee!

How do thy potions, with insidious joy, 390

Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!

Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,

Roast of a florid vigour not their own:

At every draught more large and large they grow.

A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;

Till sapp'd their strength, and every part unsound,

Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

E'en now the devastation is begun, 395

And half the business of destruction done;

E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,

I see the rural virtues leave the land.

Down where you anchoring vessel spreads the sail,

That idly waiting flaps with every gale,

Downward they move, a melancholy band,

Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.

Contented toil, and hospitable care,

And kind connubial tenderness are there;

Piety with wishes plac'd above. 405

And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
 And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
 Still first to fly where sensual joys invade,
 Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
 To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame; 410
 Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried.
 My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
 Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
 That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
 Thou guide, by which the nobler arts excel, 415
 Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
 Farewell! and Oh! where'er thy voice be tried,
 On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
 Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
 Or winter wraps the polar world in snow. 420
 Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
 Redress the rigours of th' inclement clime;
 Aid slighted Truth with thy persuasive strain
 Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
 Teach him, that states of native strength possess'd, 425
 Though very poor, may still be very bless'd;
 That trade's proud empire hastens to swift decay,
 As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;
 While self-dependent power can time defy,
 As rocks resist the billows and the sky. 430

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

VIII

ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

5

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

10

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

15

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

25

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke:
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

30

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

35

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
 If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
 Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

40

Can storied urn or animated bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
 Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
 Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

45

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
 Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

50

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

55

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
 Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise.
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
 And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
 Forbad to wade thro' slaughter to a throne,
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

65

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

70

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

75

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

85

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

90

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

95

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn;

100

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
 That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
 His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
 And pore upon the brook that bubbles by.'

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
 Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
 Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
 Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.'

'One morn I missed him on the custom'd hill,
 Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;

Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he,

'The next, with dirges due in sad array
 Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne;—
 Approach and read (for thou can'st read) the lay
 Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
 A youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown:
 Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
 And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;
 Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
 He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
 He gained from Heav'n, 'twas all he wish'd, a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

IX

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE

Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed
 With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
 Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
 The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
 Voice only fails, else how distinct they say, 5
 "Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!"
 The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
 (Blessed be the art that can immortalize;
 The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
 To quench it!) here shines on me still the same. 10

Faithful remembrances of one so dear,
 O, welcome guest, though unexpected here!
 Who bidd'st me honour with an artless song,
 Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
 I will obey, not willingly alone, 15
 But gladly, as the precept were her own:
 And, while that face renews my filial grief,
 Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
 Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,—
 A momentary dream that thou art she. 20

My mother! when I learnt that thou wast dead,
 Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
 Hovered thy spirit, o'er thy sorrowing son,
 Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
 Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfeet, a kiss: 25
 Perhaps a 'tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
 Ah, that maternal smile! It answers—Yes.
 I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
 I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
 And, turning from my nursery window, drew 30
 A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
 But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone

And still to be so to my latest age,
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
 Such honours to thee as my numbers may;
 Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
 Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.

70

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,
 When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers, 75
 The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
 I pricked them into paper with a pin
 (And thou wast happier than myself the while,
 Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),
 Could those few pleasant days again appear, 80
 Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
 I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
 Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.—
 But no—what here we call our life is such,
 So little to be loved, and thou so much, 85
 That I should ill requite thee to constrain
 Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

85

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
 (The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed),
 Shoots into port at some well-havened isle, 90
 Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile.
 There sits quiescent on the floods that show
 Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
 While airs impregnated with incense play
 Around her, fanning light her streamers gay; 95
 So thou, with sails how swift! hast reached the shore,
 "Where tempests never beat nor billows roar,"*
 And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
 Of life, long since, has anchored by thy side.
 But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest, 100
 Always from port withheld, always distressed—
 Me howling blasts drive devions, tempest tossed,

Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost,
 And day by day some current's thwarting force
 Sets me more distant from a prosperous course. 105
 Yet, oh, the thought that thou art safe, and he!
 That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
 My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
 From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;
 But higher far my proud pretensions rise— 110
 The son of parents passed into the skies!
 And now, farewell—Time unrevoled has run
 His wonted course, yet what I wished is done.
 By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
 I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again; 115
 To have renewed the joys that once were mine,
 Without the sin of violating thine:
 And while the wing of Fancy still are free,
 And, I can view this mimic show of thee,
 Time has but half succeeded in his theft—
 Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left. 120

W. COWPER

X

MICHAEL

If from the public way you turn your steps
 Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
 You will suppose that with an upright path
 Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
 The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
 But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
 The mountains have all opened out themselves,
 And made a hidden valley of their own.

No habitation can be seen; but they
 Who journey thither find themselves alone
 With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
 That overhead are sailing in the sky.

10

It is in truth an utter solitude;
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
 But for one object which you might pass by,
 Might see and notice not Beside the brook
 Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones'

And to that simple object appertains

A story—unenriched with strange events
 Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
 Or for the summer shade. It was the first
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me
 Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
 Whom I already loved;—not verily

20

For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
 Where was their occupation and abode.

And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel

30

For passions that were not my own, and think
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)
 On man, the heart of man, and human life.

Therefore, although it be a history

Homely and rude, I will relate the same
 For the delight of a few natural hearts;
 And, with yet, fondoi feeling, for the sake
 Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
 Will be my second self when I am gone.

UPON the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
 There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
 An old man; stout of heart, and strong of limb.
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength; his mind was keen,

40

Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone, and, oftentimes,
 When others heeded not (He heard the South 50
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise !
 Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.)
 The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
 Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
 (The winds are now devising work for me!")
 And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
 The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
 Up to the mountains: he had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
 That came to him, and left him, on the heights.) 60
 So lived he till his eightieth year was past
 (And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
 Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.)
 Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
 The common air: hills, which with vigorous step
 He had so often climbed: which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship still or courage, joy or fear,
 Which, like a brook, preserved the memory 70
 Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered linking to such acts
 The certainty of honourable gain.)
 Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.
 His days had not been passed in singleness.
 His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
 Though younger than himself full twenty years., 80

She was a woman of a stirring life,
 Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
 Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
 That small, for flax, and if one wheel had rest
 It was because the other was at work.

The Pair had but one inmate in their house.

An only child, who had been born to them
 When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
 To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase.
 With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
 With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
 The one of an inestimable worth,
 Made all their household. I may truly say.

That they were as a proverb in the vale
 For endless industry.) When day was gone.

And from their occupations out of doors
 The son and Father were come home, even then,
 Their labour did not cease; unless when all
 Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
 Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
 Sat round the basket piled with oat-en cakes.

And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
 Was ended. Luke (for so the Son was named)
 And his old Father both betook themselves
 To such convenient work as might employ
 Their hands by the fireside: perhaps to card
 Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
 Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
 Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
 That in our ancient uncouth country style
 With huge and black projection overbrowed
 Large space beneath, as duly as the light
 Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
 An aged utensil, which had performed
 Service beyond all others of its kind.

90

100

Early at evening did it burn—and late,
 Surviving comrade of uncounted hours.
 Which, going by from year to year, had found,
 And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
 Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
 Living a life of eager industry.) 120
 And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
 There by the light of this old lamp they sat,
 Father and Son, while far into the night
 The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
 Making the cottage through the silent hours
 Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
 This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
 And was a public symbol of the life
 That thrifty Pair had lived.) For, as it chanced,
 Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
 Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
 High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
 And westward to the village near the lake;
 And from this constant light, so regular
 And so far seen, the House itself, by all
 Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
 Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR. 130
 Thus living on through such a length of years, 140
 The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
 Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
 This son of his old age was yet more dear—
 Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
 Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
 Than that a child, more than all other gifts
 That earth can offer to declining man,
 Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
 And stirrings of inquietude, when they ~~presented~~
 By tendency of nature needs must fail.) 150
 Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
 His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes

Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To act of tenderness, and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind, 160
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 170
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a ~~wanting~~ ~~affectionate~~ was placed
At gate o. in the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,

Something between a hindrance and a help;
 And, for this cause not always, I believe, 190
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
 Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
 Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.)

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
 Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
 Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
 He with his Father daily went, and they
 Were as companions, why should I relate
 That objects which the Shepherd loved before
 Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came 200
 Feelings and emanations—things which were
 Light to the sun and music to the wind.
 And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his father's sight the boy grew up:
 And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
 He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
 From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
 Distressful tidings. Long before the time
 Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 210
 In surety for his brother's son, a man
 Of an industrious life, and ample means;
 But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
 Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
 Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
 A grievous penalty, but little less
 Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim.
 At the first hearing, for a moment took
 More hope out of his life than he supposed
 That any old man ever could have lost) 220
 As soon as he had armed himself with strength
 To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
 The Shepherd's sole resource, to sell at once
 A portion of his patrimonial fields.

*emanations—things which were dearer now than ever from the Shepherd's point of view—
 (aspiration of aspiration or after-thought)*

Such was his first resolve, he thought again,
 And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he.
 Two evenings after he had heard the news,
 "I have been toiling more than seventy years,
 And in the open sunshine of God's love
 Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
 Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
 That I could not lie quiet in my grave.

Our lot is a hard lot: (the sun himself
 Has scarcely been more diligent than I;) 230
 And I have lived to be a fool at last
 To my own family. (An evil man
 That was, and made an evil choice, if he
 Were false to us; and if he were not false,
 There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
 Had been no sorrow.) I forgive him;—but
 'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

When I began, my purpose was to speak
 Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.

(Our Luke shall leave us. Isabel; the land
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free:
 He shall possess it, free as is the wind
 That passes over it.) We have, thou know'st.
 Another kinsman—he will be our friend
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
 Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go.
 And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
 He quickly will repair this loss, and then
 He may return to us. (If here he stay.
 What can be done? Where every one is poor,
 What can be gained?)

230

240

250

At this the old Man paused,
 And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
 Was busy, looking back into past times
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
 He was a parish-boy—at the church-door

They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence 260
 And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
 A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
 And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
 Went up to London, found a master there,
 Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
 To go and overlook his merchandise
 Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich.
 And left estates and monies to the poor,
 And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored
 With marble which he sent from foreign lands. 270

These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
 Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
 And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
 And thus resumed.—“Well, Isabel! this scheme
 These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
 Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
 —We have enough—I wish indeed that I
 Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
 —Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
 Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
 To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
 —If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night.”

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
 With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
 Was restless morn and night, and all day long
 Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
 Things needful for the journey of her son.
 But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
 To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
 By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 290
 Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
 And when they rose at morning she could see
 That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
 She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
 Were sitting at the door, “Thou must not go:

We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."

(The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart.) That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do

His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over: Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round:
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart tomorrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length

She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,

And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son.

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330

To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
 I look upon thee, for thou art the same
 That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
 And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
 I will relate to thee some little part
 Of our two histories; it will do thee good
 When thou art from me, even if I should touch
 On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
 First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
 To new-born infants—thou did'st sleep away
 Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
 Then fell upon thee Day by day passed on,
 And still I loved thee with increasing love,
 Never to living or came sweeter sounds
 Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
 First uttering, without words, a natural tune,
 While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
 Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
 And in the open fields my life was passed 350
 And on the mountains; else I think that thou
 Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
 But we were playmates. Luke: among these hills,
 As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
 Have played together, nor with me didst thou
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know.”
 Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
 He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
 And said, “Nay, do not take it so—I see
 That these are things of which I need not speak. 360
 —Even to the utmost I have been to thee
 A kind and a good Father: and therein
 I but repay a gift which I myself
 Received at others' hands; for, though now old
 Beyond the common life of man, I still
 Remember them who loved me in my youth.
 Both of them sleep together here they lived,

As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mould. 370
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled. God blessed me in my work.
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. { Heaven forgive me, Luke. 380
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go."}

At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:—
"This was a work for us: and now, my Son.
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale:—do thou thy part:
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms.
Will I without thee go again, and do:
All works which I was wont to do alone.
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
(Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone.
What will be left to us!—But, I forget

My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived, 410
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds.) Now, fare thee well—
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not ~~here~~: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here, and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheepfold At the sight 420
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissed him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight. 430

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work

With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now,
 Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
 He to that valley took his way, and there
 wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
 To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
 He in the dissolute city gave himself
 To evil courses ignominy and shame
 Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
 To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

440

There is a comfort in the strength of love:
 'Twill make a thing durable, which else
 Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
 I have conversed with more than one who well
 Remember the old Man, and what he was
 Years after he had heard this heavy news.
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
 He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
 And listened to the wind; and, as before,
 Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep.
 And for the land, his small inheritance.
 And to that hollow dell from time to time
 Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
 His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
 The pity which was then in every heart
 For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
 That many and many a day he thither went,
 And never lifted up a single stone.

450

460

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
 Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog.
 Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
 The length of full seven years, from time to time,
 He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
 And left the work unfinished when he died.
 Three years, or little more, did Isabel
 Survive her Husband; at her death the estate

470

Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
 The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
 Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
 On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
 In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
 That grew beside their door; and the remains 480
 Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
 Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

W. WORDSWORTH

XI

“MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD”

My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky:
 So was it when my life began,
 So is it now I am a man,
 So be it when I shall grow old 5
 Or let me die!
 The Child is father of the Man:
 And I could wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety.

W. WORDSWORTH

XII

“THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US.”

The World is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
 The winds that will be howling at all hours
 And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers,
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

W. WORDSWORTH

XIII

THE CLOUD

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
 From the seas and the streams;

I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
 In their noonday dreams.

From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
 The sweet buds every one,

When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
 As she dances about the sun.

I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
 And whiten the green plains under,
 And then again I dissolve it in rain,
 And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
 And their great pines groan aghast;

And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
 While I sleep in the arms of the blast.

Sublime on the towers of my skyey bower,

5

10

5

10

15

Lightning my pilot sits; In a cavern under is fetter'd the thunder,
 It struggles and howls at fits; Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
 This pilot is guiding me, Lured by the love of the gelli that move
 In the depths of the purple sea; Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
 Over the lakes and the plains, Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
 The Spirit he loves, remains; And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
 Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
 And his burning plumes outspread, Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
 When the morning star shines dead;
 As on the jag of a mountain crag,
 Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
 An eagle alit one moment may sit
 In the light of its golden wings.
 And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
 Its ardours of rest and of love,
 And the crimson pall of eve may fall
 From the depth of Heaven above,
 With wings folded I rest, on mine aëry nest,
 As still as a brooding dove.
 That orbéd maiden with white fire laden,
 Whom mortals call the Moon,
 Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
 By the midnight breezes strewn;
 And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
 Which only the angels hear,
 May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,

The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee.

Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent, 55
Till the calm rivers, lakes and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl; 60
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfuri,
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape.

Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,—
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair, 70
Is the million-coloured bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores; 75
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air. 80
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

ODE ON THE POETS

Bards of Passion and of Mirth
 Ye have left your souls on earth!
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new?

—Yes, and those of heaven commune
 With the sphere of sun and moon;
 With the noise of fountains wondrous
 And the parle of voices thunderous:
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And on another, in soft ease

10

Seated on Elysian lawns
 Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns;
 Underneath large blue-bells tented.
 Where the daisies are rose-scented,
 And the rose herself has got
 Perfume which on earth is not:
 Where the nightingale doth sing
 Not a senseless, trancéd thing,
 But divine melodious truth;
 Philosophic numbers smooth;
 Tales and golden histories
 Of heaven and its mysteries.

15

20

Thus ye live on high, and then
 On the earth ye live again:
 And the souls ye left behind you
 Teach us, here, the way to find you
 Where your other souls are joying,
 Never slumber'd, never cloying.
 Here, your earth-born souls still speak
 To mortals, of their little week;

25

30

Of their sorrows and delights;
 Of their passions and their spites;
 Of their glory and their shame;
 What doth strengthen and what maim.
 Thus, ye teach us, every day,
 Wisdom, though fled far way.

35

Bards of Passion and of Mirth
 Ye have left your souls on earth;
 Ye have souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new!

40

J. KEATS

XV

HAPPY INSENSIBILITY

In a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy tree,
 Thy branches ne'er remember
 Their green felicity:
 The north cannot undo them
 With a sleety whistle through them,
 Nor frozen thawings glue them
 From budding at the prime.

5

In a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy, brook,
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember
 Apollo's summer look;
 But with a sweet forgetting
 They stay their crystal fretting.
 Never, never letting
 About the frozen time.

10

15

Ah! would 'twere so with many
 A gentle girl and boy!
 But were there ever any
 Writhed not at passéd joy?
 To know the change and feel it,
 When there is none to heal it
 Nor numbéd sense to steal it—
 Was never said in rhyme.

20

J. KEATS

XVI

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

I

My hair is grey, but not with years,

Nor grew it white

In a single night,

As men's have grown from sudden fears:

My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,

5

But rusted with a vile repose,

For they have been a dungeon's spoil,

And mine has been the fate of those

To whom the goodly earth and air

Are bann'd, and barr'd— forbidden fare;

10

But this was for my father's faith

I suffer'd chains and courted death;

That father perish'd at the stake

For tenets he would not forsake;

And for the same his lineal race

In darkness found a dwelling-place;

We were seven—who now are one,

15

Six in youth, and one in age,
 Finish'd as they had begun,
 Proud of Persecution's rage; 20
 One in fire, and two in field,
 Their belief with blood have seal'd,
 Dying as their father died,
 For the God their foes denied;
 Three were in a dungeon cast. 25
 Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,
 In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
 There are seven columns, massy and grey,
 Dim with a dull imprison'd ray, 30
 A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
 And through the crevice and the cleft
 Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
 Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
 Like a marsh's meteor lamp: 35
 And in each pillar there is a ring,

And in each ring there is a chain;
 That iron is a cankering thing,

For in these limbs its teeth remain,
 With marks that will not wear away, 40
 Till I have done with this new day,
 Which now is painful to these eyes,
 Which have not seen the sun so rise
 For years—I cannot count them o'er,
 I lost their long and heavy score, 45
 When my last brother droop'd and died,
 And I lay living by his side.

III

They chain'd us each to a column stone,
 And we were three—yet, each alone;

We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together—yet apart,
Fetter'd in hand, but join'd in heart,
'Twas still some solace, in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth;
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone.
An echo of the dungeon stone.

A grating sound, not full and free,

65

As they of yore were wont to be:

It might be fancy, but to me

They never sounded like our own

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do—and did my best—
And each did well in his degree.

The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven—

For him my soul was sorely moved;
And truly might it be distress'd
To see such bird in such a nest:
For he was beautiful as day—

(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free)—

A polar day, which will not see

50

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80

A sunset till its summer's gone,
 Its sleepless summer of long light,
 The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
 And thus he was as pure and bright,
 And in his natural spirit gay,
 With tears for nought but others' ills,
 And then they flow'd like mountain rills,
 Unless he could assuage the woe
 Which he abhor'd to view below.

85

90

95

The other was as pure of mind,
 But form'd to combat with his kind;
 Strong in his frame, and of a mood
 Which 'gainst the world in war had stood.
 And perish'd in the foremost rank
 With joy:—but not in chains to pine;
 His spirit wither'd with their clank.
 I saw it silently decline—
 And so perchance in sooth did mine:
 But yet I forced it on to cheer
 Those relics of a home so dear.
 He was a hunter of the hills,
 Had follow'd there the deer and wolf;
 To him this dungeon was a gulf,
 And fetter'd feet the worst of ills.

100

105

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
 A thousand feet in depth below
 Its massy waters meet and flow;
 Thus much the fathom-line was sent
 From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
 Which round about the wave inthralls:

110

VI

A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave.

115

Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
We heard it ripple night and day;

Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;

And I have felt the winter's spray

Wash through the bars when winds were high

120

And wanton in the happy sky;

And then the very rock hath rock'd,

And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,

Because I could have smiled to see

The death that would have set me free.

125

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food;
It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare,

130

And for the like had little care:

The milk drawn from the mountain goat

Was changed for water from the moat,

Our bread was such as captives' tears

Have moisten'd many a thousand years,

135

Since man first pent his fellow men

Like brutes within an iron den;

But what were these to us or him?

These wasted not his heart or limb;

My brother's soul was of that mould

140

Which in a palace had grown cold,

Had his free breathing been denied

The range of the steep mountain's side;

But why delay the truth?—he died.

I saw, and could not hold his head.

145

Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,—
 Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
 To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
 He died, and they unlock'd his chain,
 And scoop'd for him a shallow grave
 Even from the cold earth of our cave.

150

I begg'd them as a boon to lay
 His corse in dust whereon the day
 Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
 But then within my brain it wrought,
 That even in death his free-born breast
 In such a dungeon could not rest.
 I might have spared my idle prayer—
 They coldly laugh'd and laid him there:
 The flat and turfless earth above
 The being we so much did love;
 His empty chain above it leant,
 Such murder's fitting monument!

155

160

VIII

But he, the favourite and the flower,
 Most cherish'd since his natal hour,
 His mother's image in fair face.
 The infant love of all his race.
 His martyr'd father's dearest thought.
 My latest care, for whom I sought
 To hoard my life, that his might be
 Less wretched now, and one day free;
 He, too, who yet had held untired
 A spirit natural or inspired—
 He, too, was struck, and day by day
 Was wither'd on the stalk away.
 Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
 To see the human soul take wing
 In any shape, in any mood:

165

170

175

The last, the sole, the dearest link
 Between me and the eternal brink,
 Which bound me to my failing race,
 Was broken in this fatal place.

One on the earth, and one beneath—

My brothers—both had ceased to breathe:

I took that hand which lay so still,

Alas! my own was full as chill;

I had not strength to stir, or strive,

But felt that I was still alive—

A frantic feeling, when we know

That what we love shall ne'er be so.

I know not why

I could not die,

I had no earthly hope but faith,

And that forbade a selfish death.

IX

What next befell me then and there

I know not well—I never knew—

First came the loss of light, and air,

And then of darkness too:

I had no thought, no feeling—none—

Among the stones I stood a stone,

And was, scarce conscious what I wist,

As shrubless crags within the mist:

For all was blank, and bleak, and grey;

It was not night, it was not day;

It was not even the dungeon-light,

So hateful to my heavy sight,

But vacancy absorbing space.

And fixedness without a place;

There were no stars, no earth, no time,

No check, no change, no good, no crime,

But silence, and a stirless breath

Which neither was of life nor death;
 A sea of stagnant idleness,
 Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless;

250

X

A light broke in upon my brain,—
 It was the carol of a bird;
 It ceased, and then it came again,
 The sweetest song ear ever heard.

And mine was thankful till my eyes
 Ran over with the glad surprise.

255

And they that moment could not see
 I was the mate of misery;

But then by dull degrees came back
 My senses to their wonted track;

260

I saw the dungeon walls and floor
 Close slowly round me as before,

I saw the glimmer of the sun
 Creeping as it before had done,

265

But through the crevice where it came
 That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,

And tamer than upon the tree;

A lovely bird, with azure wings,

And song that said a thousand things,

And seeni'd to say them all for me!

270

I never saw its like before,

I ne'er shall see its likeness mōre:

It seem'd like me to want a mate,

But was not half so desolate,

And it was come to love me when

275

None lived to love me so again,

And cheering from my dungeon's brink,

Had brought me back to feel and think.

I know not if it late were free,

Or broke its cage to perch on mine,

280

But knowing well captivity.
 Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
 Or if it were, in winged guise.

A visitant from Paradise:
 For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while 285
 Which made me both to weep and smile—
 I sometimes deem'd that it might be
 My brother's soul come down to me;
 But then at last away it flew,
 And then 'twas mortal well I knew, 290
 For he would never thus have flown.
 And left me twice so doubly lone.
 Lone as the corse within its shroud.
 Lone as a solitary cloud,—

A single cloud on a sunny day,
 While all the rest of heaven is clear,
 A frown upon the atmosphere,
 That hath no business to appear
 When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate.
 My keepers grew compassionate:
 I know not what had made them so.
 They were inured to sights of woe,
 But so it was:—my broken chain
 With links unfasten'd did remain. 305
 And it was liberty to stride
 Along my cell from side to side,
 And up and down, and then athwart,
 And tread it over every part;
 And round the pillars one by one.
 Returning where my walk begun,
 Avoiding only, as I trod,
 My brothers' graves without a sod;

285

290

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310

For if I thought with heedless tread
 My step profaned their lowly bed,
 My breath came gaspingly and thick,
 And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick.

315

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
 It was not therefrom to escape,
 For I had buried one and all
 Who loved me in a human shape;
 And the whole earth would henceforth be
 A wider prison unto me:
 No child, no sire, no kin had I
 No partner in my misery,
 I thought of this, and I was glad,
 For thought of them had made me mad;
 But I was curious to ascend
 To my barr'd windows, and to bend
 Once more, upon the mountains high,
 The quiet of a loving eye.

320

325

330

XIII

I saw them, and they were the same,
 They were not changed like me in frame;
 I saw their thousand years of snow
 On high—their wide long lake below,
 And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
 I heard the torrents leap and gush
 O'er channell'd rock and broken bush:
 I saw the white-wall'd distant town,
 And whiter sails go skimming down;
 And then there was a little isle,
 Which in my very face did smile.
 The only one in view;

335

340

A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing.
Of gentle breath and hue.

The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seem'd joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seem'd to fly;
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave.
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest

345

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360

365

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days.
I kept no count, I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free;
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where;
It was at length the same to me.
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,

370

375

SECTION

These heavy walls to me had grown
 A hermitage—and all my own!
 And half I felt as they were come
 To tear me from a second home:
 With spiders I had friendship made,
 And watch'd them in their sullen trade,
 Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
 And why should I feel less than they?

380

We were all inmates of one place,
 And I, the monarch of each race,
 Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!

385

In quiet we had learn'd to dwell;
 My very chains and I grew friends,
 So much a long communion tends
 To make us what we are:—even I
 Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

390

. LORD BYRON

XVII

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT

With fingers weary and worn,
 With eyelids heavy and red,
 A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
 Plying her needle and thread—
 Stitch—stitch—stitch!

4

In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
 She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

8

"Work—work—work!
 While the cock is crowing aloof:
 And work—work—work
 Till the stars shine through the roof!
 It's oh! to be a slave

12

Along with the barbarous Turk,
 Where woman has never a soul to save,
 If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work
 Till the brain begins to swim;
 Work—work—work
 Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
 Seam, and gusset, and band,—
 Band, and gusset, and seam,
 Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
 And sew them on in a dream!"

20

24

"Oh! men with sisters dear!
 Oh! men with mothers and wives!
 It is not linen you're wearing out,
 But human creatures' lives!
 Stitch—stitch—stitch,
 In poverty, hunger and dirt,
 Sewing at once with a double thread
 A shroud as well as a shirt."

28

32

"But why do I talk of death!
 That phantom of grisly bone,
 I hardly fear his terrible shape,
 It seems so like my own—
 It seems so like my own,
 Because of the fasts I keep;
 O God! that bread should be so dear,
 And flesh and blood so cheap!"

36

40

"Work—work—work!
 My labour never flags;
 And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
 A crust of bread—and rags.
 That shattered roof,—and this naked floor,—

44

A table,—a broken chair,—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there. 48

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work
As prisoners work for crime! 52
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumbed.
As well as the weary hand. 56

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright,— 60
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling.
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring. 64

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head.
And the grass beneath my feet'
For only one short hour 68
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for love or hope,
But only time for grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart, 72
76

But in their briny bed
 My tears must stop, for every drop
 Hinders needle and thread!"

80

With fingers weary and worn,
 With eyelids heavy and red,
 A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
 Plying her needle and thread—
 Stitch—stitch—stitch!

84

In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
 Would that its tone could reach the rich!—
 She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

88

T. HOOD

XVIII

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

I see the wrong that round me lies,
 I feel the guilt within,
 I hear, with groans and travail cries.
 The world confess its sin.

1117
4

As I look to God, I am free
 Yet, in the maddening maze of things
 And tossed by storm and flood,
 To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
 I know that God is good!

8

I know not what the future hath
 Of marvel or surprise,
 Assured alone that life and death / *by God, under him*
 His mercy underlies.

12

61
And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

16

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.
And so beside the silent sea,
I wait the muffled oar:
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

24

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I can not drift
Beyond His love and care.

28

J. G. WHITTIER

XIX

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel:
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,

5

And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

10

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

15

20

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows.
I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

25

30

35

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark:
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the holy Grail.

40

With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.

I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony

45

50

55

60

65

70

75

Swells up, and shakes and falls
 Then move the trees, the copses nod
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
 'O just and faithful knight of God!

80

Ride on! the prize is near.'

So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;

By bridge and ford, by park and pile,
 All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide.

84

Until I find the holy Grail.

LORD TENNYSON

XX

ULYSSES [1842]

It little profits that an idle king, *Ulysses the King*
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole *it*.
 Unequal laws unto a savage race, / *of all men*)
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. /
 I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
 Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and, alone; on shore, and when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades →
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met; *all the*
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

15

The unexplored world, whose margin fades 20
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me 25
 Little remains but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself.
 And this grey spirit yearning in desire 30
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.

Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail

40

In offices of tenderness, and pay

Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:

There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,

45

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—

That ever with a frolic yelcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

50

Death closes all: but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep

55

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulf will wash us down:
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

LORD TENNYSON

XXI

RING OUT WILD BELLS

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
 The flying cloud, the frosty light:
 The year is dying in the night;
 Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
 The year is going, let him go;
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
 For those that here we see no more;
 Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
 Ring in redress to all mankind.

5

10

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life.
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

15

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;

Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,

But ring the fuller minstrel in.

20

Ring out false pride in place and blood,

The civic slander and the spite;

Ring in the love of truth and right,

Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;

25

Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;

Ring out the thousand wars of old,

Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,

The larger heart, the kindlier hand;

30

Ring out the darkness of the land,

Ring in the Christ that is to be.

LORD TENNYSON

XXII

PROSPICE (1864)

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face.
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place.

The power of the night, the press of the storm, 5
 The post of the foe;

Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,

Yet the strong man must go:

For the journey is done and the summit attained,¹⁰

And the barriers fall,¹⁵
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,

The reward of it all.

I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,

The best and the last!

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore,²⁰

And bade me creep past.

No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers

The heroes of old.

Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears

Of pain, darkness and cold.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave.

The black minute's at end.

And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend.

shall change, shall become first a peace, then a joy,²⁵

Then a light, then thy breast,

thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,

And with God be the rest!

R. BROWNING

SONG XXXIII.

KING ROBERT OF SICILY

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane

And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine.

Appareled in magnificent attire,

With retinue of many a knight and sonire,

On St. John's eve, at vespers proudly sat

And heard the priests chant the Magnificat.
And as he listened, o'er and o'er again
Repeated, like a burden or refrain.

He caught the words, '*Deposuit potentes*' Line 11 in 22
and done
10
De sede, et exaltavit humiles'; To Eng.
And slowly lifting up his kingly head
He to a learned clerk beside him said, 15
'What mean these words?' The clerk made answer meet,
'He has put down the mighty from their seat,
And has exalted them of low degree.'

Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,
"Tis well that such seditionous words are sung
Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;
For unto priest and people be it known,
There is no power can push me from my throne!" 20

And, leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,
Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.
When he awoke, it was already night;
The church was empty, and there was no light,
Save where the lamps, that glimmered few and faint, 25

Lighted a little space before some saint.

He started from his seat and gazed around,
But saw no living thing and heard no sound.
He groped towards the door, but it was locked:
He cried aloud, and listened, and then knocked, 30
And uttered awful threatenings and complaints,
And imprecations upon men and saints.
The sound re-echoed from the roof and walls
As if dead priests were laughing in their stalls.

At length, the sexton, hearing from without 35
The tumult of the knocking and the shout,
And thinking thieves were in the house of prayer,
Came with his lantern, asking, 'Who is there?'
Half choked with rage, King Robert fiercely said,

'Open: 'tis I, the King! Art thou afraid?' 40
 The frightened sexton, muttering, with a curse,
 'This is some drunken vagabond, or worse'
 Turned the great key and flung the portal wide:
 A man rushed by him at a single stride,
 Haggard, half naked, without hat or cloak, 45
 Who neither turned, nor looked at him, nor spoke,
 But leaped into the blackness of the night,
 And vanished like a spectre from his sight. v

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
 And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine. 50
 Despoiled of his magnificent attire, ~~spirit led him~~,
 Bareheaded, breathless, and besprent with mire.
 With sense of wrong and outrage desparate, ~~desperate~~,
 Strode on and thundered at the palace gate:
 Rushed through the courtyard, thrusting in his rage 55
 To right and left each seneschal and page. ~~Clement~~
 And hurried up the broad and sounding stair.
 His white face ghastly in the torches' glare.
 From hall to hall he passed with breathless speed;
 Voices and cries he heard, but did not heed, 60
 Until at last he reached the banquet-room,
 Blazing with light, and breathing with perfume. ~~an unlit year~~
 There on the dais sat another king.
 Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring, ~~and a purple robe~~,
 King Robert's self in features, form, and height. 65
 But all transfigured with angelic light! ~~as if he were a man~~
 It was an Angel: and his presence there
 With a divine effulgence filled the air, ~~great lustre or brightness~~
 An exaltation, piercing the disguise,
 Though none the hidden Angel recognize. 70

A moment speechless, motionless, amazed,
 The throneless monarch on the Angel gazed,
 Who met his look of anger and surprise

With the divine compassion of his eyes;
 Then said, 'Who art thou? and why com'st thou here?' 75.
 To which King Robert answered with sneer,
 'I am the King, and come to claim my own
 From an impostor, who usurps my throne!' ~~and who practices~~
 And suddenly, at these audacious words, ~~the~~
 Up sprang the angry guests, and drew their swords; 80
 The Angel answered, with unruffled brow,
 'Nay, not the King, but the King's Jester, thou
 Henceforth shalt wear the bells and scalloped cape,
 And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape;

Thou shalt obey my servants when they call,
 And wait upon my henchmen in the hall!' ~~and who practices~~
 Deaf to King Robert's threats and cries and prayers,
 They thrust him from the hall and down the stairs;
 A group of tittering pages ran before, ~~and who practices~~
 And as they opened wide the folding-door, 90
 His heart failed, for he heard, with strange alarms,
 The boisterous laughter of the men-at-arms,
 And all the vaulted chamber roar and ring
 With the mock plaudits of 'Long live the King!' ~~and who practices~~

Next morning, waking with the day's first beam, 95
 He said within himself, 'It was a dream!'
 But the straw rustled as he turned his head,
 There were the cap and bells beside his bed.
 Around him rose the bare, discoloured walls, ~~and who practices~~
 Close by, the steeds were champing in their stalls, 100
 And in the corner, a revolting shape,
 Shivering and chattering sat the wretched ape.
 It was no dream, the world he loved so much
 Had turned to dust and ashes at his touch!

Days came and went; and now returned again
 To Sicily the old Saturnian reign: ~~and who practices~~ 105
~~and who practices~~

Under the Angel's governance benign
 The happy island danced with corn and wine,
 And deep within the mountain's burning breast
 Enceladus, the giant, was at rest.

110

Meanwhile King Robert yielded to his fate,
 Sullen and silent and disconsolate.

Dressed in the motley garb that Jesters wear,
 With look bewildered and a vacant stare,
 Close shaven above the ears, as monks are shorn,
 By courtiers mocked, by pages laughed to scorn,
 His only friend the ape, his only food

115

What others left—he still was unsubdued.

And when the Angel met him on his way,
 And half in earnest, half in jest, would say,
 Sternly, though tenderly, that he might feel

120

The velvet scabbard held a sword of steel,
 'Art thou the King?' the passion of his woe
 Burst from him in irresistible overflow,
 And, lifting high his forehead, he would fling
 The haughty answer back, 'I am, I am the King!'

125

Almost three years were ended; when there came
 Ambassadors of great repute and name
 From Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
 Unto King Robert, saying that Pope Urbane
 By letter summoned them forthwith to come

130

On Holy Thursday to his city of Rome.

The Angel with great joy received his guests,
 And gave them presents of embroidered vests,
 And velvet mantles with rich ermine lined,
 And rings and jewels of the rarest kind.

135

Then he departed with them o'er the sea
 Into the lovely land of Italy,

Whose loveliness was more resplendent made

140

By the mere passing of that cavalcade,

With plumes, and cloaks, and housings, and the stir
 Of jewelled bridle and of golden spur,

And lo! among the mienials, in mock state,
 Upon a piebald steed, with shambling gait,
 His cloak of fox-tails flapping in the wind,
 The solemn ape demurely perched behind,
 King Robert rode, making huge merriment.
 In all the country towns through which they went,
 The Pope received them with great pomp and blare
 Of bannered trumpets, on Saint Peter's square, 150
 Giving his benediction and embrace,
 Fervent, and full of apostolic grace.
 While with congratulations and with prayers
 He entertained the Angel unawares,
 Robert, the Jester, bursting through the crowd, 155
 Into their presence rushed and cried aloud,
 'I am the King! Look, and behold in me
 Robert, your brother, King of Sicily!
 This man, who wears my semblance to your eyes,
 Is an impostor in a king's disguise. 160
 Do you not know me? does no voice within
 Answer my cry, and say we are akin?'
 The Pope in silence, but with troubled mien,
 Gazed at the Angel's countenance serene;
 The Emperor, laughing, said, 'It is strange sport 165
 To keep a madman for thy Fool at court!'
 And the poor, baffled Jester in disgrace
 Was hustled back among the populace.
 In solemn state the Holy Week went by,
 And Easter Sunday gleamed upon the sky; 170
 The presence of the Angel, with its light,
 Before the sun rose, made the city bright,
 And with new fervour-filled the hearts of men,
 Who felt that Christ indeed had risen again.
 Even the Jester, on his bed of straw, 175
 With haggard eyes the unwonted splendour saw,
 He felt within a power unfelt before,
 And, kneeling humbly on his chamber floor,

He heard the rushing garments of the Lord
Sweep through the silent air, ascending heaven-ward. 180

And now the visit ending, and once more
Valmond returning to the Danube's shore,
Homeward the Angel journeyed, and again
The land w^s made resplendent with his train,
Flashing along the towns of Italy 185
Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea.

And when once more within Palermio's wall,
And, seated on the throne in his great hall,
He heard the Angelus from convent towers,
As if the better world conversed with ours.
He beckoned to King Robert to draw nigher,
And with a gesture bade the rest retire;
And when they were alone, the Angel said,
'Art thou the King?' Then, bowing down his head,
King Robert crossed both hands upon his breast, 190
And meekly answered him: 'Thou knowest best!

My sins as scarlet are; let me go hence,
And in some cloister's school of penitence,
Across those stones, that pave the way to heaven,
Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven!' 200
The Angel smiled, and from his radiant face
A holy light illumined all the place,
And through the open window, loud and clear,
They heard the monks chant in the chapel near,
Above the stir and tumult of the street:
'He has put down the mighty from their seat.
And has exalted them of low degree!
And through the chant a second melody
Rose like the throbbing of a single string:
'I am an Angel, and thou art the King!' 205
210

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,
Lifted his eyes, and lo! he was alone!

But all apparell'd as in days of old,
 With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold;
 And when his courtiers came, they found him there
 Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in silent prayer.

H. W. LONGFELLOW
 1857 - 1858

XXIV

THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE

In half-forgotten days of old,
 As by our fathers we were told,
 Within the town of Rome there stood
 An image cut of cincel wood,
 And on the upraised hand of it
 Men might behold these letters writ—
 ‘PERCUTE HIC.’ which is to say,
 In that tongue that we speak to-day,
 ‘Strike here!’ nor yet did any know
 The cause why this was written so.

10

Thus in the middle of the square,
 In the hot sun and summer air,
 The snow-drift and the driving rain,
 That image stood, with little pain,
 For twice a hundred years and ten;
 While many a band of striving men
 Were driven betwixt woe and mirth
 Swiftly across the weary earth,
 From nothing unto dark nothing:
 And many an Emperor and King,
 Passing with glory or with shame,
 Left little record of his name,
 And no remembrance of the face

20

Once watched with awe for gifts or grace.

Fear little, then, I counsel you,

What any son of man can do;

Because a log of wood will last

While many a life of man goes past,

And all is over in short space.

Now so it chanced that to this place

30

There came a man of Sicily,

Who when the image he did see,

Knew full well who, in days of yore,

Had set it there; for much strange lore,

In Egypt and in Babylon,

This man with painful toil had won;

And many secret things could do;

So verily full well he knew

That master of all sorcery

Who wrought the thing in days gone by,

40

And doubted not that some great spell

It guarded, but could nowise tell

What it might be. So, day by day,

Still would he loiter on the way,

And watch the image carefully,

Well mocked of many a passer-by.

And on a day he stood and gazed

Upon the slender finger, raised

Against a doubtful cloudy sky,

Nigh noon tide: and thought, 'Certainly

50

The master who made thee so fair

By wondrous art, had not stopped there.

But made thee speak, had he not thought

That thereby evil might be brought

Upon his spell?' But as he spoke,

From out a cloud the noon sun broke

With watery light, and shadows cold:

Then did the Scholar well behold

How, from the finger carved to tell
 Those words, a short black shadow fell
 Upon a certain spot of ground,
 And thereon, looking all around
 And seeing none heeding, went straightway
 Whereas the finger's shadow lay,
 And with his knife about the place
 A little circle did he trace;
 Then home he turned with throbbing head,
 And forthright gat him to his bed,
 And slept until the night was late
 And few men stirred from gate to gate.

70

So when at midnight he did wake,
 Pickaxe and shovel did he take,
 And, going to that now silent square,
 He found the mark his knife made there,
 And quietly with many a stroke
 The pavement of the place he broke:
 And so, the stones being set apart,
 He 'gan to dig with beating heart,
 And from the hole in haste he cast
 The marl and gravel; till at last,
 Full shoulder high, his arms were jarred,
 For suddenly his spade struck hard
 With clang against some metal thing:
 And soon he found a brazen ring.
 All green with rust, twisted, and great
 As a man's wrist, set in a plate
 Of copper, wrought all curiously
 With words unknown though plain to see.
 Spite of the rust: and flowering trees.
 And beasts, and wicked images,
 Whereat he shuddered: for he knew
 What ill things he might come to do.
 If he should still take part with these
 And that Great Master strive to please.

80

90

But small time bad he then to stand
 And think, so straight he set his hand
 Unto the ring but where he thought
 That by main strength it must be brought
 From out its place, lo! easily
 It came away, and let him see
 A winding staircase wrought of stone,
 Where through the new-come wind did moan.

100

Then thought he. 'If I come alive
 From out this place well shall I thrive,
 For I may look here certainly
 The treasures of a king to see.
 A mightier man than men are now.
 So in few days what man shall know
 The needy Scholar, seeing me
 Great in the place where great men be,
 The richest man in all the land?
 Beside the best then shall I stand,
 And some unheard-of palace have:
 And if my soul I may not save
 In heaven, yet here in all men's eyes
 Will I make some sweet paradise,
 With marble cloisters, and with trees
 And bubbling wells, and fantasies, ^{fairies}
 And things all men deem strange and rare,
 And crowds of women kind and fair,
 That I may see, if so I please,
 Laid on the flowers, or mid the trees
 With half-clad bodies wandering.
 There, dwelling happier than the king,
 What lovely days may yet be mine!
 How shall I live with love and wine,
 And music, till I come to die!
 And then—Who knoweth certainly
 What hap to us when we are dead?

110

120

Truly I think by likelihood
Nought hapts to us of good or bad;
Therefore on earth will I be glad
A short space, free from hope or fear;
And fearless will I enter here
And meet my fate, whatso it be.'

Now on his back a bag had he,
To bear what treasure he might win,
And therewith now did he begin
To go adown the winding stair;
And found the walls all painted fair
With images of many a thing,
Warrior and priest, and queen and king,
But nothing knew what they might be.
Which things full clearly could he see,
For lamps were hung up here and there
Of strange device, but wrought right fair,
And pleasant savour came from them.

At last a curtain, on whose hem
Unknown words in red gold were writ,
He reached, and softly raising it
Stepped back, for now did he behold
A goodly hall hing round with gold,
And at the upper end could see
Sitting, a glorious company:
Therefore he trembled, thinking well
They were no men, but fiends of hell.
But while he waited, trembling sore,
And doubtful of his late-learned lore,
A cold blast of the outer air
Blew out the lamps upon the stair
And all was dark behind him; then
Did he fear less to face those men
Than, turning round, to leave them there
While he went groping up the stair.

130

140

150

160

Yea, since he heard no cry or call
 Or any speech from them at all,
 He doubted they were images
 Set there some dying king to please
 By that Great Master of the art;
 Therefore at last with stouter heart
 He raised the cloth and entered in
 In hope that happy life to win,
 And drawing nigher did behold
 That these were bodies dead and cold
 Attired in full royal guise,
 And wrought by art in such a wise
 That living they all seemed to be.
 Whose very eyes he well could see,
 That now beheld not foul or fair,
 Shining as though alive they were.
 And midmost of that company
 An ancient king that man could see,
 A mighty man, whose beard of grey
 A foot over his gold gown lay;
 And next beside him sat his queen
 Who in a flowery gown of green
 And golden mantle well was clad.
 And on her neck a collar had
 Too heavy for her dainty breast;
 Her loins by such a belt were prest
 That whoso in his treasury
 Held that alone, a king might be.

170

180

190

On either side of these, a lord
 Stood heedfully before the board,
 And in their hands held bread and wine
 For service; behind these did shine
 The armour of the guards, and then
 The well-attired serving-men.
 The minstrels clad in raiment meet;
 And over against the royal seat

200

Was hung a lamp, although no flame
 Was burning there, but there was set
 Within its open golden fret ^{an *entwined* hat in}
 A huge carbuncle, red and bright; ^{a fine red jewel}
 Wherefrom there shone forth such a light
 That great hall was as clear by it
 As though by wax it had been lit,
 As some great church at Easter-tide.

Now set a little way aside,
 Six paces from the dais stood
 An image made of brass and wood,
 In likeness of a full-armed knight
 Who pointed against the ruddy light
 A huge shaft ready in a bow.

210

Pondering how he could come to know
 What all these marvellous matters meant,
 About the hall the Scholar went,
 Trembling, though nothing moved as yet;
 And for awhile did he forget
 The longings that had brought him there
 In wondering at these marvels fair;
 And still for fear he doubted much
 One jewel of their robes to touch.

220

But as about the hall he passed
 He grew more used to them at last,
 And thought, 'Swiftly the time goes by,
 And now no doubt the day draws nigh;
 Folk will be stirring: by my head
 A fool I am to fear the dead,
 Who have seen living things enow,
 Whose very names no man can know,
 Whose shapes brave men might well affright
 More than the lion in the night
 Wandering for food: therewith he drew
 Unto those royal corpses two,

230

That on dead brows still wore the crown;
 And midst the golden cups set down
 The rugged wallet from his back,
 Patched of strong leather, brown and black.
 Then, opening wide its mouth, took up 240
 From off the board, a golden cup
 The King's dead hand was laid upon.
 Whose unmoved eyes upon him shone
 And recked no more of that last shame
 Than if he were the beggar lame,
 Who in old days was wont to wait
 For a dog's meal beside the gate.

Of which shame nought our man didreck,

But laid his hand upon the neck
 Of the slim Queen, and thence undid
 The jewelled collar, that straight slid
 Down her smooth bosom to the board.
 And when these matters lie had stored
 Safe in his sack, with both their crowns.
 The jewelled parts of their rich gowns.
 Their shoes and belts, brooches and rings,
 And cleared the board of all rich things,
 He staggered with them down the hall.

But as he went his eyes did fall

Upon a wonderful green stone.

Upon the hall-floor laid alone;

He said, 'Though thou art not so great

To add by much unto the weight

Of this my sack indeed, yet thou,

Certes, would make me rich enow.

That verily with thee I might

Wage one-half of the world to fight

The other half of it, and I

The lord of all the world might die;—

I will not leave thee; 'therewithal

He knelt down midmost of the hall,

250

260

270

Thinking it would come easily
 Into his hand; but when that he
 Gat hold of it, full fast it stack,
 So fuming, down he laid his sack,
 And with both hands pulled lustily,
 But as he strained, he cast his eye
 Unto the dais, and saw there
 The image who the great bow bare
 Moving the bowstring to his ear; 280
 So, shrieking out aloud for fear,
 Of that rich stone he loosed his hold
 And catching up his bag of gold,
 Gat to his feet: but ere he stood
 The evil thing of brass and wood
 Up to his ear the notches drew;
 And clangng, forth the arrow flew,
 And midmost of the carbuncle
 Clanging again, the forked barbs fell,
 And all was dark as pitch straightway.

290

So there until the judgment day
 Shall come and find his bones laid low,
 And raise them up for weal or woe,
 This man must bide; cast down he lay
 While all his past life day by day
 In one short moment he could see
 Drawn out before him, while that he
 In terror by that fatal stone
 Was laid, and scarcely dared to moan.
 But in a while his hope returned, 300
 And then, though nothing he discerned,
 He gat him up upon his feet,
 And all about the walls he beat
 To find some token of the door,
 But never could he find it more,
 For by some dreadful sorcery
 All was sealed close as it might be,

And midst the marvels of that hall
This Scholar found the end of all.

But in the town on that same night,
An hour before the dawn of light,
Such storm upon the place there fell,
That not the oldest man could tell
Of such another: and thereby
The image was burnt utterly.

310

Being stricken from the clouds above;
And folk deemed that same bolt did move
The pavement where that wretched one
Unto his foredoomed fate had gone,
Because the plate was set again
Into its place, and the great rain
Washed the earth down, and sorcery
Had hid the place where it did lie.

320

So soon the stones were set all straight,
But yet the folk, afraid of fate,
Where once the man of cornel wood
Through many a year of bad and good
Had kept his place, set up alone
Great Jove himself, cut in white stone,
But thickly overlaid with gold.
'Which,' saith my tale, 'you may behold
Unto this day, although indeed
Some Lord or otter, being in need,
Took every ounce of gold away.'

330

But now, this tale in some past day
Being writ, I warrant all is gone,
Both gold and weather-beaten stone.

Be merry, masters, while ye may,
For men much quicker pass away.

WILLIAM MORRIS

1731 - 1896

RUGBY CHAPEL

Coldly, sadly descends
 The autumn-evening. The field
 Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
 Of wither'd leaves, and the elms.
 Fade into dimness apace,
 Silent;—hardly a shout
 From a few boys late at their play!
 The lights come out in the street,
 In the school-room windows;—but cold,
 Solemn, unlighted, austere,
 Through the gathering darkness, arise
 The chapel-walls, in whose bound
 Thou, my father! art laid.

10

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
 Of the autumn evening. But ah!
 That word, *gloom*, to my mind
 Brings thee back, in the light
 Of thy radiant vigour again;
 In the gloom of November we pass'd
 Days not dark at thy side,
 Seasons impair'd not the ray
 Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
 Such thou wast! and I stand
 In the autumn evening, and think
 Of bygone autumns with thee.
 Fifteen years have gone round
 Since thou arosest to tread,
 In the summer-morning, the road
 Of death, at a call unforeseen,

20

Sudden! For fifteen years,
 We who till then in thy shade
 Rested as under the boughs
 Of a mighty oak, have endured
 Sunshine and rain as we might,
 Bare, unshaded, alone,
 Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
 Tarriest thou now? For that force,
 Surely, has not been left vain!
 Somewhere, surely, afar,
 In the sounding labour-house vast
 Of being, is practised that strength,
 Zealous, beneficent, firm!
 Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
 Conscious or not of the past,
 Still thou performest the word
 Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
 Prompt, unwearied, as heretofore
 Still thou upraisest with zeal
 The humble good from the ground,
 Sternly repressest the bad!
 Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
 Those who with half-open eyes
 Tread the border-land dim
 'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
 Succourest!—this was thy work.
 This was thy life upon earth.
 What is the course of the life
 Of mortal men on the earth?—
 Most men eddy about
 Here and there—eat and drink,
 Chatter and love and hate,
 Gather and squander, are raised
 Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,

Striving blindly, achieving
 Nothing; and then they die—
 Perish:—and no one asks
 Who or what they have been,
 More than he asks what waves,
 In the moonlit solitudes mild
 Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
 Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

70

And there are some, whom a thirst
 Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
 Not with the crowd to be spent,
 Not without aim to go round
 in an eddy of purposeless dust,
 Effort unmeaning and vain:
 Ah yes! some of us strive
 Not without action to die
 Fruitless, but something to snatch
 From dull oblivion, nor all
 Glut the devouring grave!
 We, we have chosen our path—
 Path to a clear-purposed goal,
 Path of advance!—but it leads
 A long, steep journey, through sunken
 Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
 Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
 Then, on the height, comes the storm!
 Thunder crashes from rock
 To rock, the cataracts reply,
 Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
 Roaring torrents have breach'd
 The track, the stream-bed descends
 In the place where the wayfarer once
 Planted his footstep—the spray
 Boils o'er its borders! aloft,
 The unseen snow-beds dislodge

80

90

Their hanging ruin; alas,
Havoc is made in our train!
Friends, who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.

We, we only are left!
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compress'd, we strain on.
On—and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

100

110

120

130

If, in the paths of the world,
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing—to us thou wast still
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
 Therefore to thee it was given
 Many to save with thyself;
 And, at the end of thy day,
 O faithful shepherd! to come,
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

14.

And through thee I believe
 In the noble and great who are gone;
 Pure souls honour'd and blest
 By former ages, who else—
 Such, so soulless, so poor,
 Is the race of men whom I see—
 Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
 Seem'd but a cry of desire.
 Yes! I believe that there lived
 Others like thee in the past,
 Not like the men of the crowd
 Who all round me to-day
 Bluster or cringe, and make life
 Hideous, and arid, and vile,
 But souls temper'd with fire,
 Fervent, heroic, and good
 Helpers and friends of mankind.
 Servants of God!—or sons
 Shall I not call you? because
 Not as servants ye knew
 Your Father's innermost mind,
 His, who unwillingly sees
 One of his little ones lost—
 Yours is the praise, if mankind

150

160

Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!
See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.

Where are they tending?—A god
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long!

Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.

—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Labour for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine!

Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Langour is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.

Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away

Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return.

Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as we go.

170
180
190
200

However, how did you take my from the Committee, I asked?
They say many works of Chevigny's will soon be back again.

Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
 Strengthen the wavering line,
 Establish, continue our march.
 On, to the bound of the waste,
 On, to the City of God

My! what poetry is ours! MATTHEW ARNOLD
 Matthew Arnold's David and Goliath, the
 only man were wavering but feit of doubt when the
 real victory was slow. XXVI, and on towards bright
 "SAY NOT, THE STRUGGLE NAUGHT AVAILETH
 Foulness and me."

Say not, the struggle naught availeth,
 The labour and the wounds are vain,
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
 And as things have been they remain. 4

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars; ~~then affly now~~
 It may be, in you smoke concealed, ~~you will be~~
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers, ~~be possible to~~
 And, but for you, possess the field 8

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking, ✓
 Seem here no painful inch to gain,
 Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
 Comes silent, flooding in, the main. 12

And not by eastern windows only,
 When daylight comes, comes in the light,
 In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly, ✓
 But westward, look, the land is bright! 16

92 INTERMEDIATE POETRY SELECTIONS
XXVII

OUR CASUARINA TREE

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars
Up to its very summit near the stars,

A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,

Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
A gray baboon sits statue-like alone

Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas hail the day;

And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed
But not because of its magnificence

Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:

Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
Sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!

What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!

Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away

35

In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,

When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith

And the waves gently kissed the classic shore

Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,

When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon:

40

And every time the music rose,—before

Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,

Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime

I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay

45

Unto thy honour, Tree, beloved of those

Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose,

Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!

Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done

With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,

50

Under whose awful branches lingered pale

“Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,

And Time the shadow;” and though weak the verse

That would thy beauty fain, oh fain rehearse,

May Love defend thee from Oblivion’s curse.

55

TORU DUTT

XXVIII

UPHILL

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day’s journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.

4

But is there for the night a resting-place?

A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.

May not the darkness hide it from my face?

You cannot miss that inn.

8

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?

Those who have gone before.

Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?

They will not keep you standing at that door. 12

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?

Of labour you shall find the sum.

Will there be beds for me and all who seek?

Yea, beds for all who come. 16

C. G. ROSETTI

XXIX

NIGHTINGALES

Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song:

Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air 5
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,

A throe of the heart,

Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound. 10
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men

We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,

As night is withdrawn

From these sweet-springing meads and bursting
boughs of May,

Dream, while the innumerable choir of day

Welcome the dawn. 15

R. BRIDGES

WAR SONG OF THE SARACENS

We are they who come faster than fate; we are [Redacted]
 they who ride early or late;

We storm at your ivory gate: Pale Kings of the
 Sunset, beware! *The Chinese have taken*

Not on silk nor in saint we lie, not in curtained
 solemnity die

Among women who chatter and cry, and children
 who mumble a prayer.

But we sleep by the ropes of the camp, and we
 rise with a shout, and we tramp

With the sun or the moon for a lamp, and the
 spray of the wind in our hair.

From the lands where the elephants are, to the
 forts of Merou and Balghar,

Our steel we have brought and our star to shine
 on the ruins of Rum.

We have marched from the Indus to Spain, and
 by God we will go there again;

We have stood on the shore of the plain where
 the Waters of Destiny boom.

A mart of destruction we made at Jaltila where
 men were afraid,

For death was a difficult trade, and the sword was
 a broker of doom;

And the Spear was a Desert Physician who cured
 not a few of ambition..

And drove not a few to perdition with medicine
 bitter and strong:

And the shield was a grief to the fool and as
 bright as a desolate pool,

And as straight as the rock of Stamboul when
 their cavalry thundered along: *Fight*

For the coward was drowned with the brave
when our battle sheered up like a wave,
And the dead to the desert we gave, and the
glory to God in our song.

J. E. FLECKER.

XXXI

A BALLAD OF SIR PERTAB SINGH

IN the first year of him that first
Was Emperor and King.
A rider came to the Rose-red House,
The House of Pertab Singh.

Young he was and an Englishman,
And a soldier, hilt and heel,
And he struck fire in Pertab's heart
As the steel strikes on steel.

Beneath the morning stars they rode,
Beneath the evening sun.
And their blood sang to them as they rode
That all good wars are one.

They told their tales of the love of women,
Their tales of East and West,
But their blood sang that of all their loves
They loved a soldier best.

So ran their joy the allotted days,
Till at the last day's end
The Shadow stilled the Rose-red House
And the heart of Pertab's friend.

When morning came, in narrow chest
The soldier's face they hid,
And over his fast-dreaming eyes
Shut down the narrow lid.

4

8

12

16

20

24

Three were there of his race and creed,
 Three only and no more:
 They could not find to bear the dead
 A fourth in all Jodhpore.

28

"O Maharaj, of your good grace
 Send us a Sweeper here:
 A Sweeper has no caste to lose
 Even by an alien bier."

32.

"What need, what need?" said Pertab Singh,
 And bowed his princely head.
 "I have no caste, for I myself
 Am bearing forth the dead."

36:

"O Maharaj, O passionate heart.
 Be wise, bethink you yet:
 That which you lose to-day is lost
 Till the last sun shall set"

40.

"God only knows," said Pertab Singh,
 "That which I lose to-day:
 And without me no hand of man
 Shall bear my friend away."

44.

Stately and slow and shoulder-high
 In the sight of all Jodhpore
 The dead went down the rose-red steps
 Upheld by bearers four.

48:

When dawn relit the lamp of grief
 Within the burning East
 There came a word to Pertab Singh,
 The soft word of a priest.

52.

He woke, and even as he woke
 He went forth all in white,
 And saw the Brahmins bowing there
 In the hard morning light.

56.

"Alas! O Maharaj, alas!
O noble Pertab Singh!
For here in Jodhpore yesterday
Befell a fearful thing

(69)

"O here in Jodhpore yesterday
A fearful thing befell."

"A fearful thing," said Pertab Singh,
"God and my heart know well—

64

"I lost a friend."

"More fearful yet!

When down these steps you passed
In sight of all Jodhpore you lost—
 Ω Maharaj!—your caste.”

65

Then leapt the light in Pertab's eyes
As the flame leaps in smoke,
"Thou priest! thy soul hath never known
The word thy lips have spoke.

77

"My caste! Know thou there is a caste
Above my caste or thine,
Brahmin and Rajput are, but dust
To that immortal line:

76

"Wide as the world, free as the air,
Pure as the pool of death—
The caste of all Earth's noble hearts
Is the right soldier's faith."

80

XXXII

SEA FEVER

I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea[and
 And all I ask is a tall ship[and a star[^{the sky,} to steer her by,
 And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white
 And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn
 sail's shaking,
 breaking. 4

I must down to the seas again for the call of the
 running tide;
 It's a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied.
 And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
 And the flung spray and the blown spume and the
 sea-gulls crying. 8

I must down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy life,
 To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's
 like a whetted knife;
 And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-
 rover,
 And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long
 trick's over. 12

J. MASEFIELD

XXXIII

LAUGH AND BE MERRY

Laugh and be merry, remember, better the world with
 a song.
 Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.
 Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a span
 Laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud
 pageant of man.. 4

Here, in my room, when full of happy dreams,
With no life heard beyond that merry sound
Of moths that on my lighted ceiling kiss
Their shadows as they dance and dance around;

Or in a garden, on a summer's night,
When I have seen the dark and solemn air
Blink with the blind bats' wings, and heaven's bright face
Twitch with the stars that shine in thousands there.

W. H. DAVIES.

b 1870

12

XXXVII

LEISURE

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began,

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

W. H. DAVIES

5

10

XXXVII

THE QUEEN'S RIVAL

I

QUEEN GULNAAR sat on her ivory bed,
Around her countless treasures were spread;

Her chamber walls were richly inlaid:
With agate, porphyry, onyx and jade;

The tissues that veiled her delicate breast
Glowed with the hues of a lapwing's crest;

But still she gazed in her mirror and sighed:
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

King Feroz bent from his ebony seat:
"Is thy least desire unfulfilled, O sweet?

"Let thy mouth speak and my life be spent
To clear the sky of thy discontent."

"I tire of my beauty, I tire of this
Empty splendour and shadowless bliss;

"With none to envy and none gainsay,
No savour or salt hath my dream or day."

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose:
"Give me a rival, O King Feroz."

King Feroz spoke to his Chief Vizier:
"Lo! ere to-morrow's dawn be here,

"Send forth my messengers over the sea,
To seek seven beautiful brides for me;

"Radiant of feature and regal of mien,
Seven handmaids meet for the Persian Queen."

II

Seven new moon tides at the Vesper call,
King Feroz led to Queen Gulnaar's hall

A young queen eyed like the morning star,
"I bring thee a rival, O Queen Gulnaar." 28

But still she gazed in her mirror and sighed.
"O King my heart is unsatisfied."

Seven queens shone round her ivory bed,
Like seven soft gems on a silken thread. 32

Like seven fair lamps in a royal tower,
Like seven bright petals of Beauty's flower.

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose:
"Where is my rival, O King Feroz?" 36

III

When spring winds wakened the mountain floods,
And kindled the flame of the tulip buds,

When bees grew loud and the days grew long,
And the peach groves thrilled to the oriole's song. 40

Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed,
Decking with jewels her exquisite head;

And still she gazed in her mirror and sighed:
"O King my heart is unsatisfied." 44

Queen Gulnaar's daughter, two springtimes old,
In blue robes bordered with tassels of gold,

Ran to her knee like a wildwood fay,
And plucked from her hand the mirror away. 48

Quickly she set on her own light curls
 Her mother's fillet with fringes of pearls; 1
 Quickly she turned with a child's caprice
 And pressed on the mirror a swift, glad kiss, 52
 Queen Gulnaar laughed like a tremulous rose
 "Here is my rival, O King Feroz."

SAROJINI NAIDU

XXXVIII

ECSTASY

Heart! O my heart! lo, the spring time is walking
 In meadow and grove.
 Lo, the mellifluous Koels are making 1
 Their paeans of love. 4
 Behold the bright rivers and rills in their glancing,
 Melodious flight,
 Behold how the sumptuous peacocks are dancing / ; ; ; ; ;
 In rhythmic delight. 8

Shall we in the midst of life's exquisite choiris
 Remember our grief.
 O heart, when the rapturous season is o'er us
 Of blossom and leaf? 12
 Their joy from the birds and the streams let us borrow,
 O heart! let us sing,
 The years are before us for weeping and sorrow....
 Today it is spring! 16

SAROJINI NAIDU ..

NOTES

NOTES

BLOW, BLOW, THOU WINTER WIND

William Shakespeare (1564—1616), "in knowledge of human character, in wealth of humour, in depth of passion, in fertility of fancy, in command of all the force and felicity of language, and in soundness of judgment," has no superior in the literature of any nation or epoch. Thirty-seven plays are ascribed to him, of which about thirty are entirely his own. Besides these, he wrote two long narrative poems and a large number of sonnets. Shakespeare as a poet is nearly as great as Shakespeare the dramatist. This is shown throughout the plays in snatches of song, in the frequency of poetic imagery, in glowing lyrical passages and in flights of imagination.

This song, taken from *As You Like It*, is sung by Amiens, who had followed the good duke into exile, and who is the musical man of the play.

L. 2 unkind: unnatural

L. 7. holly: an emblem of mirth

Lines 7 to 10 form the burden or refrain of the song.

L. 14. warp: twist out of shape, as the sun does timber. Here it probably refers to the freezing of the water.

Ll. 15-16. The sting of the frost is not so sharp as the pin inflicted by one who does not remember his friend.

II

THE QUALITY OF MERCY

This passage is taken from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene I. These words are spoken in the Duke's court by Portia, disguised as a lawyer, to Shylock the Jew.

L. 1. is not strain'd: is not a thing forced.

L. 5. mightiest in the mightiest: it shows itself in the noblest form in the hands of those who have the greatest power.

becomes: adorns

L. 8. The attribute to: the outward symbol of.

L. 14. When mercy seasons justice: when justice is tempered by mercy.

L. 17 salvation: if in God's dealings with us there was to be absolute justice without mercy, none of us could hope to be saved.

we do pray for mercy: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.' (St. Matthew, VI, 12.)

III

LET ME NOT TO THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS

The theme of this sonnet is the steadfastness of true love; in this case, of friendship.

L. 1 true minds: where there is perfect truth and mutual confidence.

L. 4. bends: changes its course or nature (so as to depend upon changes in others).

L. 5. ever-fixed mark: such as a lighthouse built on a rock, which winds and seas cannot shake.

L. 7. star: the lode-star, the fixed light which guides the wandering mariner. In ancient times mariners were guided at night by certain stars.

L. 8. worth's unknown: apart from their light-giving value, stars were supposed to have a mysterious power on human character and in the formation of gems in the earth. Similarly, there is a mystic value in Love over and above its manifest benefits.

L. 9 Time's fool: a thing in the service of Time to make passing sport, as jesters were kept by noblemen to enliven their company.

though rosy lips and cheeks: Time can destroy the physical beauty of the object loved. Nevertheless, true love remains.

L. 10 bending sickle's compass: Time, according to the familiar personification, carries a scythe. The image here is derived from the cutting of a patch of corn. The 'compass' is the breadth of the sweep of the mower.

L. 11. his brief hours: the space of life allowed by Time.

L. 12 edge of doom: the verge of destruction, or death.

IV

THE NOBLE NATURE

Among the dramatists who were contemporaneous with Shakespeare the most important is Ben Jonson (1573—1637). He

united a dramatic power hardly less than Shakespeare's to a classical learning, which was greater, and a more genuine hold on the London life of his time. He is far behind Shakespeare in all points of literary charm except, strangely enough, in this one matter of lyrics.

L. 4 bald: without leaves.

sere: withered

V

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

John Milton (1608—74) is the one peer of Shakespeare. It is true that in him the comic or humorous side was not developed; on the other hand, he was a great man, a learned scholar and the author of some volumes of masterly prose works. Milton's early poems were lyrical and mainly romantic, this being the case with the masque *Comus* as well as with the Odes. His later poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, are classical in spirit. In the middle period of his life, being occupied with public duties and the troubles of his time, he gave nothing to poetry except an occasional sonnet. In his sonnets he revived the Italian form, but put into that mould matter of a new and lofty kind. Milton's greatness as a poet is based as much on the purity and depth of his religious fervour as on the richness of his imagination, musical power and command of poetic vocabulary.

The great interest of this poem lies in its last six lines. The dominating idea of Milton's life was his resolve to use his high gifts for the glory of God, and to achieve this object by writing a great poem. He feels an immense responsibility to do something worthy, and it is revealed plainly in this Sonnet.

L. 3. career: speed.

Ll. 5-6 An allusion to his youthful appearance, which was due, in great measure, to his fresh complexion.

L. 8. timely-happy: fortunate in reaching early maturity.

Ll. 10-11 even to: in strict proportion to

L. 13 all is: i.e., "even" (line 10) already not merely "shall be."

L. 14. Task-Master: God, to whom every being is responsible for the performance of the allotted task.

1

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY

This sonnet was written in November, 1642, when the Civil War had begun, and Milton, already known as a vehement Parliamentarian was living just outside one of the city gates of London. The King's army had advanced to the outskirts of London, and was threatening a further march to crush the Leaguers and Parliament at once. They were at their nearest on Saturday, the 12th of November and all that day there was intense excitement in London in expectation of an assault. However, a clever advance of the King's army was checked by a rapid march out of the Traitor's Bands under Essex and Skippon. Milton, it is evident, had shared the common alarm. If the Royalists had been let loose it would have given them peculiar pleasure to visit Milton's house.

L 2 whose chance seize: to whom chance may assign the opportunity of seizing

Ll 5-8 Milton sincerely believed in the power of poetry to confer fame. The promise contained in these lines is no mere convention; nor has it anything of arrogance.

L 5. charms: spells, the magical effect of poetry

L 8 whatever clime: in every region which circle: orb. sphere.

L. 9. Muses: in Greek mythology the nine goddesses who presided over the different kinds of Poetry, Art and Science

L 10 Emathian conqueror: Alexander the Great of Macedonia (356-323 B.C.)

Li 10-12. It is related that when Alexander captured Thebes in 333 B C., and sacked the city, he ordered that the house of the poet Pindar (522-442 B C.) should be spared.

L 12-14 According to Plutarch, when the Lacedaemonian general Lysander took Athens (404 B C), it was proposed entirely to raze the city. But while the matter was still undecided, "at a banquet of the chief officers, a certain Phocian sang some fine (verses) from a chorus of the *Electra* of Euripides; which so affected the hearers that they declared it an unworthy act to reduce a place, so celebrated for the production of illustrious men, to total ruin and desolation".

L. 13. sad Electra's poet: Euripides (about 480—406 B.C.). Sad may either qualify *Electra*, a tragedy, or *poet* in the sense of 'grave' or 'serious.'

VII

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Oliver Goldsmith (1728—1774) laments in this poem the deserted condition of his native village, owing to the gradual migration of people to urban areas. There is a similar movement in India to-day and this description will apply to several villages in this country, with some changes. Goldsmith is as elegant and graceful in his poetry as he is in his prose. There is an air of pensive melancholy about this piece due to the reflections suggested by the deserted village.

Read also his *Traveller*.

L. 1. Auburn: an imaginary name, Goldsmith's native village in Ireland being Lissoy

L. 44. Bittern: a bird resembling the heron, of solitary habit, that frequents marshes.

L. 45 Lapwing: a bird of the plover family.

L. 54. The mere word of a king can make and unmake noblemen.

L. 63. Train: here, those who pursue trade.

L. 95. Long vexations past: an example of the nominative absolute

L. 107. Latter end: death.

Ll. 137—162. This picture of the village clergyman was suggested to Goldsmith, in some measure, by his own brother

L. 137. Copse: contrasted from coppice, a wood of low growth.

L. 142. Passing: surpassing.

Ll. 189—192. Considered one of the finest similes in the English language

Ll. 193—218 It has been suggested that Goldsmith drew his sketch of the schoolmaster from his own teacher, Thomas Bryne at Lissoy. He had retired from an Irish regiment after having fought under the Duke of Marlborough.

L. 232. Twelve good rules: rules of good conduct often hung up in public houses of the time, including such precepts as 'Keep no bad company,' 'Lay no wagers,' etc. *Wise no health*

Game of goose: a game played on a board divided into compartments some of which had the picture of a goose.

L. 243 **The barber's tale:** barbers have always been known to be great gossips.

L. 259. **Masquerade:** a dance or an entertainment in which people wear masks that they may not be recognised.

L. 318. **Gibbet:** gallows, hanging being the punishment for many crimes in those days

L. 344 **Altama:** a river in Georgia, in North America.

L. 355. **Crouching tigers:** Goldsmith did not apparently know there were no tigers in America!

L. 404 **Connubial:** belonging to the married state.

L. 418. **Torno's cliffs:** the mountains round Lake Tormea in the north of Sweden

Pambamarca: one of the peaks of the Andes in South America.

VIII

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

An elegy, at least in modern times, is a poem of lamentation written on the death of some individual like Tennyson's *In Memoriam* on his friend, Arthur Hallam, or Shelley's *Adonais*, on the young poet, Keats. The *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray (1716–1771) is, however, not written on any particular individual; it contains melancholy reflections on death and immortality. Gray spent years over the composition of this poem and polished it with great care, exhibiting finished workmanship. The Elegy was written in the churchyard of Stoke Poges, a little village near Windsor.

L. 1 **Curfew:** a bell rung at a particular hour at night, usually at eight o'clock in Norman times, calling on people to put out their lights and fires, as a precaution against fire in the days of wooden houses (from French *couver-feu*, cover fire).

L. 33. **The boast of heraldry:** the boasting of those who are entitled to wear coats of arms recognised by the College of Heralds.

L. 48 **Waked to ecstasy the living lyre:** produced such fine music that it would have seemed alive and in raptures.

L. 57. Hampden: the well-known English patriot who opposed the exactions of Charles I.

L. 59. Milton: see No. V.

L. 60. Cromwell: Oliver Cromwell (1599—1658) the Protector, who ruled England for sometime after the execution of Charles I

L. 61 Senate: often, the legislative body or parliament of a country, used extensively in India in connection with the legislative bodies of universities.

L. 97. Haply: 'Perhaps,' not 'happily.'

Epitaph: an inscription on a tomb—from Greek *epi*, upon and *taphos*, a tomb

IX

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE

Cowper (1731—1800) was the son of a clergyman and was educated at Westminster school. From early youth he was afflicted with melancholia, and he attempted once to commit suicide. He became an inmate of the Unwin family where he was tended carefully by Mrs Unwin; and the peaceful life of the country suited him well. In order to divert his mind, he wrote much poetry, most of which was characterised by a deep love of external nature. One of his friends, Lady Austen set him the task of writing poetry on subjects which she chose for him, and the result was a poem of great originality called *The Task*. The last years of Cowper's life were years of great misery and loneliness. Cowper wrote many lively and humorous poems like *John Gilpin*, but the prevailing note of much of his poetry is one of dejection. An example of his mood of depression may be seen in his last poem, *The Castaway*. Cowper had a large number of friends with whom he corresponded regularly, and his letters have been collected and published in several volumes. They are delightful reading, and Cowper is by many considered the greatest letter-writer in English.

Cowper lost his mother in 1737 when he was six years old. In later years, his cousin Anne Bodham sent him a picture of his mother as a gift. On looking at it, Cowper was deeply moved, and in these lines, he has expressed his sorrow at the loss he had sustained when so young. The poem is characterised by pathos and tender recollection of his joyless childhood.

L. 8. The art: The painting.

L. 16. as: as if.

L. 19. Elysian: cf. note on line 11 of *Ode on the Poets*, p. 125.

L. 24 Wretch even then: Cowper was unhappy as a child. He was frequently subject to moods of depression, and at school, he was ridiculed and bullied by his companions

L. 36. Maidens: maid-servants.

L. 50 bauble coach: toy coach with which children play.

L. 53 The pastoral house: The rectory at Great Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, where Cowper's father was a Clergyman

L. 71 Numbers: verses: poetry. cf. Note on line 20 of *Ode on the Poets*, p. 126

L. 87 Thy Unbound Spirit: your immortal state.

L. 88. Albion: an ancient poetical name for England derived from the white cliffs of the English sea-coast.

L. 97. "where tempests . . . roar": a quotation from Samuel Garth's poem, *The Dispensary*.

L. 98. Thy loved consort: Cowper's father died in 1756 when Cowper was 25 years old.

X

MICHAEL

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) spent most of his life in rural districts in the North of England, and was the chief of a band who were styled the Lake Poets. His position as a poet is due not to daring imagination or intellectual brilliancy, but to moral insight combined with firmness of character, and to the patience with which he prosecuted his art. His poetry stands for two ideas—the sacredness of common human nature as distinguished from the pomp of courts or the fashions of so-called society, and, secondly, the beauty and beneficence of external Nature. In respect of Nature and its mystic influences he endeavoured to give a new philosophic character to his teaching.

In this poem we have Wordsworth at his best and most characteristic—the simple and expressive language, rising at times to poignant eloquence; the rustic scene; the pathos 'treachant but not tender—an iron pathos'; and above all the deep and sympathetic knowledge of the human heart. In a letter to Charles Fox,

dsworth speaks of *Michael* and *The Brothers* as poems written a view to show 'that men who do not wear fine clothes can deeply.' The personages and the sheepfold are drawn from life, being near the poet's home at Grasmere.

L. 2. *Ghyll*: is a short and for the most part a steep valley, in a stream running through it. (W.W.)

Ll 28—30. the power of Nature: it was Wordsworth's belief that Nature exercised a powerful, beneficent influence in building the character and refining the feelings of those who lived close contact with her.

L. 81. a stirring life: an active or busy life.

L. 94. they were as a proverb: their industry had become proverbial.

L. 100. a mess of pottage: a kind of soup.

L. 169. Clipping is the word used in the north of England for tearing. (W.W.)

L. 179. two steady roses: the redness of the cheeks signifies perfect health.

L. 189. a hindrance and a help: the lad, because of his youthfulness and inexperience, was as much a trouble as a help to his father in his work.

Ll. 258 ff. The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ings Chapel. (W.W.)

a parish-boy: a boy dependent upon the charity of the parish for his support.

L. 374. these fields were burdened: mortgaged as security for debt.

XI

MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD

L. 2. a rainbow: not only because the rainbow is in itself among the most beautiful and impressive of natural phenomena, but also because of the religious associations it must have had for the poet in his childhood. See *Genesis*, IX. 12—17.

L. 7. the Child: the saying has so completely passed into the currency of a proverb that it is difficult to realize what a paradox it must have seemed to many of Wordsworth's first readers.

De Quincey, at the beginning of Chapter IV of his *Autobiography* remarks that Wordsworth here 'called into conscious notice the fact, else faintly or not at all perceived, that whatsoever is seen in the maturest adult, blossoming and bearing fruit, must have pre-existed by way of germ in the infant.'

L. 9. natural piety: such reverent affection as is felt by the child for its parents ought to be felt by the mature man for the days of his own childhood. The Latin word *pietas* was used to express the reverence due to parents no less than the reverence due to gods.

XII

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

L. 4. sordid boon: a gift made from base motives.

L. 6. will be howling: choose to howl.

L. 10. Pagan: a heathen, following a religion which acknowledges many gods.

L. 13. Proteus: an 'old man of the sea' in Greek mythology, who tended the seals which are the flocks of Amphitrite. He possessed the gift of prophecy and the power of assuming any shape he pleased.

L. 14. Triton: son of Poseidon and Amphitrite. 'He is described as living with them in a golden palace in the depths of the sea. He was represented as a man in his upper parts, terminating in a dolphin's tail; his special attribute is a twisted sea-shell, on which he blows, now violently, now gently, to raise or calm billows.'

wreathed: twisted.

XIII

THE CLOUD

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792—1822) had of all moderns finest lyrical gift. Unfortunately he did not possess an equal of the faculty of wisdom, prudence, or common sense, with result that he soon found himself at war with society and world. His first opinions, expressed in his long early

Queen Mab (1813) and the *Revolt of Islam* (1817), were highly revolutionary. He lived most of his later life abroad. He was drowned in the Gulf of Spezia, off the Italian coast, before the completion of his thirtieth year. His ablest poems are perhaps his dramas, but his fame rests on his lyrical poems. Some of these are simply descriptive pieces, but the words move as softly as a winged dove in air. Others are play of fancy. Of this kind is the *Skylark*, where the mind is delighted with a succession of charming images in melodious language; and of the same character is *The Cloud*. His poems are as remarkable for variety of form as for ease of versification. Shelley was a beautiful figure, gradually escaping from his waywardness of spirit and over-fluency of utterance, and growing to something greater, when death overtook him.

The Cloud illustrates Shelley's remarkable powers of fancy and imagination on the one hand, and of versification on the other. By poetic licence he makes the cloud tell its own story. Note the poet's minute observation of Nature and his musical excellence.

Ll. 1—12. The cloud as the giver of rain and moisture.

L. 5. waken: because blossoms are brighter after moisture. There may be a further reference to flowers that are folded up at night as if asleep.

L. 8. dances about the sun: this phrase describes the annual motion of the earth round the sun, but the context refers to the diurnal motion on the earth's axis. Possibly the poet intends both.

L. 9. flail: instrument used for threshing corn.

L. 11. dissolve: often a shower of hail is followed by a shower of rain which speedily melts it.

L. 12. laugh: poetic interpretation of the growl of distant thunder.

Ll. 13—30. The cloud in relation to stormy weather.

L. 17. the towers of . . . : the poet imagines a sky such as is seen before the bursting of the rains, when clouds are gathered and heaped up upon each other in striking forms and the atmosphere is charged with electricity. Near the top of the cloud-structure is an illumination indicating the presence of lightning, while lower down in the dark dense clouds may be supposed to be the caves of thunder, of which occasional rumblings are heard.

L. 23. genii: spirits.

Ll. 31—44. Sunrise and sunset.

L. 31 sanguine: blood-coloured; used of the eastern sky when the sun has just risen

meteor eyes: the bright dazzling sun.

L. 32 plumes: the brightness in the sky, especially irradiated clouds

L. 35. rack: moving or drifting cloud. The poet imagines that the sun ascends with the aid of a cloud on which he sits. An instance of Fancy

L. 40 ardours of rest and of love: an attempt to combine the glowing light of sunset over the ocean with the ideas of rest and love associated with evening

Ll. 45—58. The moon and the stars

L. 50 only the angels: referring to the old idea of the music of the spheres, which men's ears are too gross to hear.

L. 55. wind-built: the cloud is supposed to dwell in a tent of thick air by which it is upheld and carried.

Ll. 59—72. Relation to various natural bodies

L. 71. sphere-fire: the sun

Ll. 73—84 Autobiographic.

L. 81 cenotaph: literally, empty tomb; here, the blue dome and bare pavilion, or cloudless sky.

The metre is anapaestic, with frequent iambuses. The rhymes fall only on the even lines, but each of the odd lines can be divided into rhyming halves. The stanzas vary: the first and the last have three quatrains, the others end with a sestet. The second has eighteen lines, while the third, fourth and fifth have fourteen

XIV

ODE ON THE POETS

John Keats (1795—1821) died in Rome of consumption just over twenty-five. Unlike contemporary poets, he had no interest in the public questions of his time, but sought inspiration from Greek mythology and mediaeval romance. His best work in his Odes. The *Ode to a Nightingale* and the *Ode on a Greek Urn* were new in kind and wonderful in quality. The *Ode Autumn* is a succession of striking and pleasing pictures. The genius of Keats passionately longed for Beauty, which he identified with Truth. In expression, he turned away from the

diction of the eighteenth century, and imitated the manner of the Elizabethans.

In this ode the poet playfully asserts that the great poets of the past still live two lives, one on earth amongst their readers, and the other in heaven on the Elysian lawns.

L. 1 **Passion:** strong emotion, such as is necessary to sustain great poetry. Perhaps here the emphasis is thrown on tragic and pathetic verse, while 'Mirth' suggests the comic and the joyous.

L. 4 **double-lived:** possessed of a second life. Keats was in the habit of forming compound words according to his pleasure.

L. 8 **parle:** speech, from the French.

L. 11. **Elysian:** adjective from Elysium, the abode of the blessed in Greek mythology, therefore expressive of happiness and repose.

L. 12. **Dian's fawns:** the fawns sacred to Diana, the goddess of hunting.

L. 18. **trancéd thing:** mere ecstatic song of love. The nightingales of heaven are supposed to sing philosophic and wonderful poetry.

L. 20. **numbers:** verse; a use of the term derived from Latin and frequent in poetry; expressive of the regularity required in metrical feet.

L. 21-22 An example of Keats' power of creating romantic feeling.

L. 26 **the way to find you:** create in us a spirit or power like to your own, so that we may ultimately share your happiness.

L. 30. **little week:** short lives

L. 31—34. The themes of poetry

XV

HAPPY INSENSIBILITY

L. 1 **drear-nighted:** another example of Keats' fondness for compound words.

L. 4 **green felicity:** the happy time when their branches are covered with green leaves. An example of transferred epithet.

L. 5. **undo:** the opposite of 'to do'; here, 'to annul or destroy.'

L. 12. **Apollo:** the Sun-God of the Greeks

L. 14. **fretting:** the rustling of their crystal surface.

L. 15 **petting:** sulking, being peevish

Ll. 21—24. Cf. Tennyson, *Locksley Hall*, "This is truth the poet sings, That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things." The lines mean: "No poet has ever sung of men who have known the change from joy to sorrow and have not at the same time, in the absence of any anodyne or palliative, writhed at the thought of past joy."

XVI

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

Lord George Gordon Byron (1788—1824) was born of a good family and was the son of an army officer; he succeeded in early youth to the title of a grand-uncle, and was educated at Harrow and Cambridge. The splendour of his poetic genius was early recognised, and with money, rank and fame on his side he possessed at least the external conditions of happiness. He had, however, a curious inborn power of procuring himself unhappiness, and his life was desolated by a painful quarrel with his wife. His poetry contains many times repeated his own picture, as he would have wished the world to receive it, but he loved mystery and pose, and how much of the picture is faithful it is difficult to say. His character, however, is not of much interest. His poetry deals much with the history of Europe, and he is one of the few English poets who have really interested Continental readers. He is chiefly remembered by his lyrics and his lyric passages, though *Don Juan* shows traces of constructive power and possibilities of development which his early death forbade.

The Prisoner of Chillon (pronounced *Shyon*) is a lyric monologue. It is a tribute paid to a suffering hero by another great lover of freedom. Byron's Bonnivard and the Bonnivard of history are not the same. The real Bonnivard was imprisoned in 1530 for political reasons by the Duke of Savoy, and no brothers shared his imprisonment. He remained a prisoner for six years, the last four of which were spent by him in the subterranean vault. But Byron found in Bonnivard a kindred spirit which fired his poetic soul. Byron was a revolutionary aristocrat, and in this poem, as in many others, he sings of the glory of freedom. The object of the poem is to consider captivity in the abstract, and to mark its effects in gradually chilling the mental powers as it benumbs and freezes the

animal frame, until the unfortunate victim becomes, as it were, a part of his dungeon, and identified with his chains.'

The chief beauty of the poem is its simplicity; the description of the situation of the dungeon at Chillon is a description of the conditions of a hopeless bondage (lines 107—117); and earlier we have a description of the interior of the dungeon (lines 27—37). Not only are these descriptions simple, but the pathos is also simple, e.g., the account of the lingering death of Bonnivard's youngest brother (lines 186—201), or the feeling of utter desolation which filled the mind of Bonnivard after the death of the youngest brother, (lines 212—218) Later in the poem, the bird's carol, soothing Bonnivard's troubled spirit and gradually restoring his consciousness, and his fancy that the bird might be an angel from heaven or the spirit of his youngest brother, are strokes from a master hand.

The poem is not intended to teach any moral, but there is a moral reflection in the lines :

"My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are —even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh"

Such is the influence of habit on the human mind that a man like Bonnivard who

"could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free"

came, after a few years of prison life, to feel the dungeon was a second home—a hermitage all his own.

The style of the poem, though simple, is full of poetic beauties, which are due chiefly to a lavish use of figures of speech, such as Metaphor, Simile, Personification, Alliteration and Oxymoron. The last is a figure of speech by which two contradictory ideas are brought together as in lines 54 and 55 or line 114. Sometimes a word is repeated in one and the same line with happy effect, e.g., lines 122, 147, 201, 236. In line 215 there is a climax.

L. 4 as men's have grown from sudden fears: the hair of some people is known to have suddenly turned grey as the result of an unexpected shock of alarm. The hair of Ludovic Sforza, Duke of Milan in the fifteenth century, is said to have grown white in a single night. Similarly, the hair of Marie Antoinette, queen

of Louis XVI of France, turned grey all of a sudden as the result of extreme fright at the horrors of the French Revolution.

L. 11 faith: creed, that is, political and religious belief. Bonnivard considered himself to be a citizen of the republic of Geneva and independent of the Duke of Savoy to whom he refused to owe allegiance. He was also a Protestant.

L. 13 perished at the stake: was burnt alive. The stake was a wooden post to which heretics condemned to death were tied before they were burnt.

L. 20 proud of Persecution's rage: glorying in the suffering to which they were subjected by their angry persecutors.

L. 27 of Gothic mould: of the Gothic style of architecture which prevailed in Europe during the middle ages. It was called 'Gothic' after the Goths, an old German tribe.

L. 31. which hath lost its way: which seems to have entered the dungeon by mistake and to have been unable to get out of it again.

L. 35. like a marsh's meteor lamp: like the unsteady phosphorescent light sometimes visible in a swamp.

L. 39 its teeth: the marks of its teeth or bite.

L. 41 this new day: the new life of freedom. Bonnivard was so long shut up in a dark dungeon that his life after his release appeared to him as a novel experience, and the bright light of the sun hurt his eyes.

L. 44 long and heavy score: he had lost all reckoning of time because the period was so long and so sad.

L. 57. pure elements of earth: light and air.

L. 64. an echo of the dungeon stone: the dismal tone of their voice was in keeping with the dismal interior of the dungeon.

L. 80. young eagles: the eagle is a large bird of prey which has two notable characteristics: (1) it soars to a great height, and (2) it possesses a powerful vision, so much so that it was believed to be able to gaze at the sun without blinking.

L. 82. Polar day: at the Poles the day is of six month's duration and the night is of equal length. All through summer it is day, and all through winter it is night.

L. 85. snow-clad offspring of the sun: the light of the sun reflected from the snow makes a polar day of incomparable brightness and beauty. 'Offspring,' like 'issue,' is never used in the plural when it means 'children.'

L. 102. those relics of a home so dear: his two brothers were the only survivors to remind him of his beloved home.

L. 107. Lake Leman: also called the Lake of Geneva, the largest of the Swiss lakes, with an area of 331 square miles and a maximum depth of 900 feet.

L. 110. fathom-line: a line or string marked with fathoms (a measure equivalent to six feet), and with a weight attached, for measuring the depth of a lake or sea.

L. 113. double dungeon: a prison made doubly secure by the stone walls and the lake.

L. 130. hunter's fare: the rough food generally eaten by hunters.

L. 142. free breathing: liberty of movement.

L. 155 within my brain it wrought: the idea came into my mind

L. 160. turfless: without a covering of grass

L. 163. such murder's fitting monument: the chain which used to fasten Bonnivard's brother is called a memorial of the slow death to which he was put by his persecutors

L. 166. his mother's image in fair face: whose beautiful face was exactly like his mother's

Ll. 174-175. he too was struck away: the youngest brother is compared to a flower struck with a blight and drying up while still fixed to its stem.

Ll. 180-181 I've seen it on the breaking ocean . . motion: "I have seen men cast on the stormy sea struggling desperately for life, and after death with their bodies swollen in the water."

Ll. 182-183. I've seen the sick and ghastly bed . . . dread: "I have seen a sinner lying in his last illness, with his body full of repulsive sores, and with his mind maddened by fear of death"

L. 185. unmixed with such: it was a scene of pure sorrow without any admixture of horror

L. 230. And that forbade a selfish death: the Christian faith forbids suicide

Ll. 243-244. But vacancy . . without a place: "I saw nothing but a formless void filling the whole of space, and a vague sameness and changelessness that had no reference to any particular locality"

L. 262. Close slowly round me: as consciousness gradually returned he saw his surroundings more and more distinctly, and

realized that he was in the same old dungeon.

L. 358 I had not left my recent chain: he wished he had not climbed up to the window and gazed upon the scene outside, because the view only caused him fresh pangs of regret.

XVII

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT

Thomas Hood (1799—1845) was the son of a publisher in London. In early life he suffered from acute poverty. For most of his life, he worked as a journalist on the staff of different periodicals. He edited a magazine of his own called "Hood's Magazine." He became a friend and companion of Charles Lamb, through whom he got acquainted with several men of letters in London. Hood was popular for his humorous writings, but he also wrote several serious poems which reveal his humanity and sympathy for the poor.

This poem was first published in the Christmas number of *Punch* in 1843 without the signature of the author. It at once attracted the attention of the public to the sufferings of labourers who had to endure long hours of monotonous toil unrelieved by any relaxation. Note that it is the song sung by an old feeble woman who has to ply her needle and thread from morning till night to earn her livelihood. The conditions of the working people in the middle of the last century were indeed pitiable.

XVIII

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807—1892) belonged to a Quaker family of America. He received little education, but loved to read Burns, Scott, Shakespeare, and he was familiar with the Bible. At twenty-one he took to journalism and about the same time became interested in politics. On the death of his father he took over the management of the family farm, apparently without giving up journalism. He took an active part in the anti-slavery campaign. Whittier began writing verses as a youth, and continued to write to the last. Many of his later poems are pervaded by a

deeply religious spirit. Several of them possess an autobiographic interest, as expressly setting forth the poet's views of God and immortality. Of this kind is *The Eternal Goodness*, a few stanzas from which are given here.

L. 5. the maddening maze of things: the puzzling contradictions and confusion of the world.

L. 11. life and death: object of *underlies* in the next line.

L. 15 the bruised reed: *Cp. St. Matthew*, XII, 20: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

L. 18 no works: no outward actions to show what his Faith

is

L. 21 beside the silent sea I wait: to await death.

L. 25. His islands: the islands of the Blessed.

L. 26 fronded palms: palms with large fronds or leaves.

XIX

SIR GALAHAD

Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809—1892) was the son of a country clergyman. He was educated at Cambridge, and led a very retired life in the country, devoted wholly to poetry. He was the great representative of the Victorian age, and kept his hold upon the public for sixty years. He was always in touch with national feeling, and believed that 'it was his function to penetrate, and as an artist to interpret, the inner meaning of the modern spirit—to find a poetic expression alike for its religion and for its science.' His work is not, like that of his friend Browning, strong in its grasp of human character, but it unites acute observation of all that is beautiful with ideas drawn from almost all the past literature of Europe. He is, in short, a great poet of culture.

The subject of this poem is derived from the Arthurian legends. According to tradition Arthur was a British king who ruled in the west country, and for long repelled the attacks of the heathen Saxons. These legends represent Arthur as a great champion of Christianity, surrounded by a band of devoted knights, the Knights of the Round Table. In support of religion they perform many feats, and, especially, they undertake a search for the Holy Grail. This is the cup used by Christ on the occasion

of the Last Supper. It appears to the knights in a vision and they resolve to search for it and restore it to the world. It is understood that it is only visible to the pure in heart, and this is why none, even of Arthur's knights, is successful in the quest. He, however, who comes nearest to success is Sir Galahad, whose character may be gathered from the poem. Galahad is a knight specially devoted to the service of religion, and he has chosen a life of chastity. He does not despise women, and recognises their charm, but he has a higher end in view.

L 1 casques: helmets. As a knight errant Galahad wanders about seeking opportunities to put down evil doers.

L 2 tough: not easily broken

L 4 pure: free from selfishness; especially, free from lust

L 5 shattering: possibly of its effect on the ear.
In lines 5—12 an onomatopoeic effect is probably intended.

L 9. lists: an enclosure where knights tilt, that is, meet in trials of skill.

L 12 ladies' hands: it was usual for the ladies to watch the tournaments from the galleries, and, at the end, acclaim the victors in the manner indicated.

L 21 more bounteous aspects: visions of Paradise.

L 22 transports: caused by such heavenly visions.

L 25. crescent: the new moon. It is an old belief that the new moon is attended by storms, or at least by a change in the weather.

Lines 25—80 describe the sights that present themselves to Galahad's vision and the sounds he hears as he rides in a mood of mystic ecstasy.

L 29. secret: unknown or invisible to the world, and revealed only to him.

L 31 stalls: seats in a church where the clergy sit.

L 35 censer: a vessel in which incense is burnt.

L 42 Grail: the cup into which Christ poured wine at the last supper with His disciples on the eve of His Crucifixion. See St. Matthew XXVI, 27-28.

L 43 stoles: long robes: used only of ecclesiastical dress

L 45. blood of God: the blood of Christ. Having poured the wine into the cup, Christ gave it to His disciples, saying, as he did so, that this was His blood which was shed for the remission of man's sins

L. 47. tides: streams of water.

the glory: the 'awful light' of line 41; the divine light surrounding the angels as they bear the cup

L. 52 dumb: that is, the sound of footsteps in them is muffled by the snow on which they fall.

L. 53. tempest: probably "hail." The "leads" are leaden roofs or buildings; the hail crackles as it falls on them, and leaps lightly off the mail-clad knight.

L. 56. driving: used intensively, coming down with force.

L. 67 lilies: the white lily is a flower symbolic of purity and peace, associated by many poets with Paradise.

L. 70 armour: the word "armour" seems to be used comprehensively to denote not only the actual armour, but the body of the knight. Some angel touches them and he ceases to feel any consciousness of them.

L. 76. shakes and falls: trembles and dies away

XX

ULYSSES

This poem is an adaptation of a classical story to embody a modern ideal. It carried a particular appeal to Tennyson's contemporaries at a time when the political future seemed full of danger, and in religion men's minds were overcast with doubt. It expresses that spirit of adventure which urges men on to attempt something new, whether in the physical or the intellectual worlds.

L. 1 king: Ulysses was king of Ithaca, a barren, rocky island.

L. 3 wife: Penelope.

L. 4 unequal laws: human laws, however carefully administered, can never be perfectly just

a savage race: the people of Ithaea were rough and warlike.

L. 5 know not me: cannot understand my restless nature.

L. 7 to the lees: to the full. 'Lees' properly means the sediment of wine.

L. 10 scudding drifts: clouds rapidly driven by the wind.

rainy Hyades: 'Hyades' was the name given by the Greeks to a constellation whose morning rising in May ushered in the rainy season.

L. 11. a name: famous

L. 17 ringing plains: battlefields resounding with the din of conflict

Troy: Ulysses was one of the Greek princes that went to the Trojan war.

L. 18 I am a part met: 'what I am now is the result of all the various experiences through which I have passed'

L. 19. all experience . I move: i.e., the more we know, the more aware are we of the immense amount of the unknown

L. 24 As tho' to breathe were life: as though the mere act of breathing constituted life

L. 27 eternal silence: the silence of death, which puts an end to all activity for ever. Cp Wordsworth,

'Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence'

L. 29 three suns: three years, the portion of his one life still left to him is very short

L. 42 household gods: these were the gods that presided over dwellings and domestic concerns. They were the *Lares* and the *Penates*. The *Lares* were usually deified ancestors or heroes, and the *Penates* were the guardian deities of the household. Ulysses hopes that Telemachus will pay to the household gods the homage and worship due to them

L. 44 puffs her sails: on account of the wind filling the sail

L. 47 with a frolic welcome took: cheerfully welcomed

L. 48 the thunder and the sunshine: foul as well as fair weather, misfortunes as well as joys

opposed: presented to 'the thunder and the sunshine.'

L. 53 strove with Gods: in the battles on the plain before Troy the gods sometimes mingled in the fighting, and Mars was believed to have been actually wounded by the Greek Diomedes

I. 58 smite: strike with the oars

L. 59 furrows: the troughs or hollows between one wave and another

I. 60 the baths: the ancients believed that ocean was a river surrounding the world, and that the sun and the stars, on setting, sank into it hence 'the western horizon'

L. 63 Happy Isles: the fabulous islands of the blest, supposed to lie somewhere beyond the Pillars of Hercules, i.e., straits of Gibraltar. Here were the gardens of the Hesperides

L. 64. Achilles: in Greek legend the son of Peleus and Thetis. He was brave and relentless, and was slain before Troy.

L. 68. One equal temper of heroic hearts: heroic hearts of the same temper or mettle.

L. 69. made weak . . . in will: with bodies enfeebled by age but of undaunted determination

XXI

RING OUT WILD BELLS

These stanzas are taken from the last section of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, a long elegiac poem, published in 1850, and composed in memory of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam who died at Vienna on September 15th, 1833, in his twenty-third year. The sections were written at many different places. The moods of sorrow, as in a drama, are dramatically given, with the final conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through faith in a God of Love. In these stanzas the poet turns away from past grief, and, with a joyful trust in God, looks forward to the time when a new order will be established upon earth.

L. 1. Ring out, wild bells: this refers to the custom of ringing Church bells at midnight on December 31st to mark the end of the old year and to welcome the new year.

L. 3 in the night: because it ends at midnight

L. 8. false . . . true: with the passing of the old year, let all falsehood and insincerity disappear and let truth be established among men

L. 13. dying cause: the old party system which divides men and under which power and preferment are secured by unfair means.

L. 18. faithless coldness: religious indifference; want of faith

L. 19-20. my mournful rhymes . . . minstrel in: the poet determines to dwell no longer on unavailing sorrow for the dead, but to take a wider and more hopeful view of Life and its meaning.

L. 22. the civic slander and the spite: the mutual abuse in which citizens indulge and their hatred of one another.

L. 28. the thousand years of peace: the Millennium See *Revelation*, XX, 2-6

L. 32. the Christ that is to be: Tennyson explained this as 'the broader Christianity of the future'

PROSPICE

Robert Browning (1812-1889) was the life-long contemporary of Tennyson and wrote poetry for more than half a century. Some regard him as the subtlest and strongest intellect in modern poetry; and in his knowledge of character, dramatic power and intellectual freedom he has been compared to Shakespeare. His most obvious defect is a ruggedness of poetic style; he has also the defect of obscurity. These defects are the result of his greater regard for the idea and argument than for force and musical expression. In spite of this, however, many of his shorter pieces are admirable, and occasionally we find an excellent lyric. His writings often breathe a religious spirit and are always optimistic and cheerful.

Prospice: "look forward." This is the counsel of the poem.

L. 1. **Fear death?**: "Do you think I fear death?" The whole poem is an answer to this question.

Ll. 1-12 A long expansion of the meaning of the word "death"

fog: fogs are characteristic of cold damp countries. They consist of vapour, mixed with dust, suspended in the air, and often cause a choking sensation in the throat. Browning compares the physical sensations of approaching death to those caused by fog. He then compares the dying man to one struggling up a high pass in the mountains through a snow-storm. This comparison again blends into one with that of a soldier attacking an enemy. The result is a little confusing, yet the confusion is perhaps intentional and corresponds to the struggle for expression in the mind of the dying man.

L. 4. **place:** the place of the supreme struggle, further described in the phrases which follow.

L. 5. **the power of the night:** the hour when the night is most formidable.

the press of the storm: the place where the storm is most violent.

L. 7. **Arch:** supreme

L. 10. **barriers:** somewhat obscure; possibly the barrier presented by the mountain side

L. 11. *guerdon*: reward.
 L. 15. *forbore*: refrained from striking with all its violence.
 L. 19. *brunt*: the full force of an attack.
 glad life's arrears: "My life has been a glad one, and I have not suffered as much pain as man ought to do. Somehow I feel that I shall yet have to pass through my due share of suffering, so let me meet it in the form of an open struggle with death."

L. 23. *fiend-voices*: 'Fiend' is a common term in Christian writings for the Devil and his angels; it is suggested here that these evil spirits utter base and wicked thoughts and temptations in the ears of the dying man.

L. 26. thy breast: sudden climax; the thought of a woman loved and lost

L. 28. with God be the rest: the rest of my fate. "Let God decide what other blessings will be vouchsafed to me in Paradise; I am content to know that I shall see you again."

XXIII

KING ROBERT OF SICILY

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807—1882) spent his life in the Eastern States of North America. Many visits to Europe made him familiar with European life and literature, and amongst his services to the world must be reckoned that of helping to bring about a kindly feeling between the States and England. In 1839 he published his first volume of poems entitled *Voices of the Night*, which includes the well-known pieces, *The Reaper and the Flowers*, *A Psalm of Life*, and *Footsteps of Angels*. In 1841 came out his *Ballads and Other Poems*, containing, among others, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, *Excelsior* and *The Village Blacksmith*. He continued writing poetry to the end of his long and happy life. His poems about childhood and boyhood are some of the best in English and give him a special place in English literature.

This poem, included in *Tales of a Wayside Inn* first published in 1863, is founded upon an old legend, and is one of the many to be found in Longfellow's works which bear evidence of the poet's close and continued study of the history and literature of mediæval Europe.

134 INTERMEDIATE POETRY SELECTIONS

Not long before the Normans conquered England (1066), they succeeded in gaining a foothold in the south of Italy, where they established a feudal state which ultimately included the island of Sicily, and had its centre in the city of Naples. The chief city of Sicily under Norman rule was Palermo.

L. 2. Allelouia: Germany.

L. 5. St. John's eve: December 26th. The festival of St. John the Evangelist is on December 27th. "Eve" means the evening before.

Vespers:evening prayer.

L. 6 Magnificat: the song of the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ Cp. St. Luke, I, 46—55

Ll. 9-10 Depositum . . . humiles: He (God) has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the humble.

L. 12. clerk: a priest.

L. 23. when he awoke: when he seemed to himself to awake. Here begins the dream of King Robert.

L. 26. some saint: the picture or image of some saint, before which candles are burnt in Roman Catholic churches.

L. 34. stalls: the seats of the clergy.

L. 35 sexton: the officer who has care of the church, its vessels and vestments

L. 56 seneschal: steward, one who, in great houses, was in charge of domestic affairs

L. 83. scalloped cape: a cloak with ornamental border as worn by professional fools

L. 94 mock plaudits: mocking cheers

L. 106. the old Saturnian reign: the good old days of peace and plenty; the golden age.

L. 110 Enceladus: the giant who for rebellion against Jupiter was struck with a thunderbolt and buried alive under Mount Etna. The smoke of the volcano was supposed to be the breath of the giant

Ll. 121-122. that he might feel . . . steel: that he might realise that firmness and strength of purpose were hidden under his outwardly gentle manner.

L. 132 Holy Thursday: the Thursday before Good Friday.

L. 135. ermine: fur of the ermine, an animal of the weasel tribe, used in robes of peers and judges.

L. 141. housings: ornamental saddle cloths.

L. 150. St. Peter's square: the space in front of the cathedral of St. Peter in Rome

L. 152. apostolic grace: the grace of Christ, which had passed to the Popes of Rome through the Apostles.

L. 169. Holy week: the week before Easter, when the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ are commemorated.

L. 189. the Angelus: a bell which among some Christians is rung three times a day (at 6 a.m., at noon, and at 6 p.m.) to summon people to repeat a prayer the first word of which is "Angelus" in remembrance of the Incarnation of Christ.

L. 197. my sins as scarlet are: my soul is deeply stained with sin. *Cp. Isaiah*, I, 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

L. 198. in some cloister's school of penitence: in the retirement of some monastery where he may repent of his sins.

XXIV

THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE

William Morris (1834—1896) is one of the best writers of verse-tales we have in the English language, and is the author of *The Earthly Paradise*, containing twenty-four stories of classical mythology and mediæval legend and romance. Half the stories are told by the inhabitants of an unknown island in the West, containing the descendants of an ancient Greek colony which has existed for many hundreds of years and where the people still speak the Greek language. The remaining half are narrated by people who had set sail to escape the Black Death in Europe. Pleasant and rapid in his narration, with a rich and well-stored mind, William Morris entertains his readers to a very attractive fare. He modestly called himself "the idle singer of an empty day," but there is also a more serious aspect of his work with which, however, the young reader need not be troubled. The poet has deliberately made his language somewhat archaic, to impart an air of antiquity to his stories.

This poem is one of the twenty-four tales included in *The Earthly Paradise*. It is shorter and less varied than most of its

companion and gives no opportunity for those intimate descriptions of scenery in which Morris revelled. But it is told with unusual and masterly conciseness, and the rather tired view of life is characteristic.

L. 7. *Percute hic.* ... Latin phrase; the meaning is given in line 9.

L. 35. Egypt and Babylon: seats of ancient civilisations, famous for their learning.

L. 80 marl: soil consisting of clay and carbonate of lime.

L. 20¹ fret is an ornamental pattern.

L. 207 wax: wax-candles.

L. 208 Easter-tide: Easter is an important Christian festival to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the great festivals the inside of many churches is a blaze of light.

L. 265. certes: certainly.

L. 316. stricken from the clouds above: by lightning.

L. 317. bolt: thunderbolt or lightning.

L. 329. Jove: or Jupiter, the chief god in heaven

XXV

RUGBY CHAPEL

Matthew Arnold (1822—1888) is greater as a prose-writer and critic than as a poet. Nevertheless, he has his own high qualities as poet: his thought is interesting and elevated, his language is dignified, and his style is classical in its restraint and gem-like polish. Of the various forms which he adopted for his poetry, the lyric and the elegiac were best suited to him. He is at his best when in a mood of plaintive reflection.

Dr. Thomas Arnold, the father of the poet, died in 1842, after having been for fourteen years headmaster of Rugby School. The characteristics which are chiefly dwelt upon in this elegy are his combined strength and sympathy which made him the guide and support of those weaker than himself, and his steadfast determination, so far as possible, not to let those perish who were under his care.

L. 5 *Fade into dimness:* become invisible in the gathering darkness

Ll. 12-13. Dr. Arnold was buried in the School Chapel.

Ll. 29—31. Early in the morning of June 12, 1842, after Dr. Arnold had made preparations for a journey at the beginning of the midsummer holidays, he was suddenly seized with an attack of *angina pectoris* and died within a few hours.

L. 38. force: spiritual force

L. 41. sounding labour-house: the vast universe which is full of many-sided activity. The meaning is that earthly death is not the end of a man's work, but his soul continues to be active in other spheres.

L. 47. the Spirit in whom thou dost live: 'God, in whose life you share and through whom you live.' The poet thinks of his father after death as retaining his full personality, not as merely merged in God. *Cp. The Acts of the Apostles*, XVII, 28: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being;"

L. 54. dim: because the difference between virtue and vice is not clearly understood.

L. 60. eddy about: are tossed about without any serious purpose or aim.

Ll. 70—72 Note the skilful alliteration and melody of these lines.

L. 75. Not with the crowd to be spent: not to live aimlessly as the majority of people do

Ll. 81—83. something to snatch . . . devouring grave: to leave behind something accomplished in order that we may not be entirely forgotten after death

Ll. 86 ff. The path of advance is an uphill journey, beset with dangers and difficulties, causing many to succumb on the way.

L. 92. the cataracts reply: the sound of the waterfalls seems to re-echo the sound of the thunder

L. 99. snow-beds dislodge: the snow begins to move swiftly downwards. This is called an avalanche.

L. 100. hanging ruin: impending destruction.

Ll. 105-106 lips sternly compressed: as a sign of determination to persevere to the end

L. 143. O faithful shepherd: faithful because he would not leave his sheep in danger and save his own life

L. 148. who else: 'who but for my knowledge of thee would have seemed but an idle desire of the heart, so poor and soulless are the men whom I see around me.'

138 INTERMEDIATE POETRY SELECTIONS

L. 162 Servants of God: such heroic souls should be called the sons, rather than the servants, of God, because they have a better understanding of their Father's will, who does not desire the death of even the least of His creatures.

L. 171 ff. A God marshall'd them: mankind was placed in this world by God, but they have wandered far from the goal set before them by Him. They are now like a broken army, rent asunder by faction, and terrified by the surrounding dangers. Were it not for such great leaders as the poet's father, not one of them would be saved.

L. 190. Ye, like angels: the heroic helpers and friends of mankind spoken of above, come on this earth inspiring new hope and courage and re-forming the battle-line.

I. 203 the City of God: heaven

XXVI

SAY NOT, THE STRUGGLE NAUGHT AVAILETH

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819—1861), the son of a Liverpool merchant, was educated at Rugby and Oxford. He became a tutor at Oxford, and later entered the Education Office. As a poet he does not occupy a high place among the Victorians, but he shares their gravity and manliness, and their serious outlook on life. His importance lies chiefly in the quality of his thought and the frank and noble vitality of his character.

L. 7. the fliers: those of the enemy who are flying.

L. 8. but for you possess the field: your companions may at this very moment be victorious on the battlefield; the only thing wanted to complete the victory is that you should step forward and take your share in it.

L. 9—12. This is a beautiful simile. If you stand on the beach, the coming in of the tide may be slow and almost imperceptible, yet all the while the water is steadily advancing up the inland creeks.

L. 11. making: making way.

XXVII

OUR CASUARINA TREE

Among the few Indians who have attempted English poetry with success, Toru Dutt (1856—1877) holds a high place. She

was born on March 4, 1856 in a Hindu family in Bengal, and when she was a girl, the family became converts to Christianity. But Toru Dutt was steeped in Hindu legends and stories from the Sanskrit *Puranas*, and her English poems were directly inspired by the high ideals of ancient Hindu culture. She wrote poems on *Prahlad*, *Dhruva*, *Savitri*, *Sita* and *Lakshman*.

Toru Dutt was educated in Europe from her twelfth year, and acquired an excellent command over French and English. She returned to India after completing her education, and devoted her time to the study of Sanskrit. She had not many years to live after her return from England, and she died of consumption on August 30, 1877. During her short life, she wrote several poems, some of which were translations from the French, and others original. In 1882 her original poems were published under the title of *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* with an introduction by Edmund Gosse.

This tree is a hardy ever-green plant, a familiar sight in almost every part of India. Toru Dutt describes one particular tree in her garden-house in Calcutta, but the description is applicable to almost any casuarina tree. The poem is noteworthy, for the tender recollections of the author's childhood and also for its literary reminiscences.

L 11 darkling: in the dark.

L 25 we have played: Toru had a sister named Aru who died in her twentieth year. The poem is full of tender memories of this sister, and regret at her untimely death.

L 38-39 The classic shore of France and Italy: Toru reveals here her love of Europe and her admiration for classical literature.

L. 50 Borrowdale: A reference to Wordsworth's poem entitled *Yew Trees*. Wordsworth in treating this subject speaks of the abstractions—Death and Time—as living under the Yew trees.

XXVIII

UPHILL

Christina Rossetti (1830—1894) was the sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She wrote easily and much. Her first published volume was the *Goblin Market* (1862); this

140 INTERMEDIATE POETIC SELECTIONS

Grace's Progress in 1866 and *A Pageant* in 1887. She also published several volumes of devotional verse in which there is a simple and direct expression of her faith.

This poem is written in the form of a dialogue between a man travelling through life and some mysterious guide who answers his questions about the course of earthly existence and the life after death. Each alternate line is the answer to the traveller's questions. The guide tells him that although the journey will be difficult he will be welcomed home at its end, in other words, that however hard earthly life may be, the rest and joy of heaven are a compensation.

L 1 Progress through life is compared to a difficult road winding up the side of a steep hill.

L 3 Will the whole course of life be hard and difficult?

L 5 Is there any rest in death?

L 7 When I am dead is it possible that I may fail to find a place of rest?

L 9 Shall I meet other people who have been on this earth when I reach the world of the dead?

L 11 When I am just about to die must I make some sign to ensure my welcome into the world of the dead?

L 14 You will find compensation for all your labour.

VXIX

NIGHTINGALES.

Robert Bridges was born in 1844, and became Poet Laureate in 1913. He was a great authority on prosody, and his own metrical experiments were many and successful. His best-known poems are mainly short lyrics, but his great work is the *Testament of Beauty* (1928), which conceives "Beauty to be the sum and summit of experience, a part of man's aspiration after immortality." He also wrote a number of poetic dramas. He died in 1929.

The poet Shelley said, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." The song of the nightingales makes the same impression on the writer of this poem. It seems to him that their song is the expression, not of joy, but of sadness, they are quite different from the birds who sing by day in simpler, happier, strains. The song of the nightingale strikes a deeper note of mystery and yearning.

The first stanza is addressed by the poet to the nightingales. Their song is so lovely that he asks them if they come from mountains and valleys and forests far more beautiful than any scenes of earth.

In the second stanza the nightingales reply that they have come from barren mountains and dry valleys; that theirs is a song of sorrow, not of joy.

L. 7. spent: dry, exhausted.

Ll. 10—12 In spite of all their excellence in song they cannot express the deep griefs of the heart.

L 11. dying cadence: a phrase of music, in which the notes become gradually softer until they are scarcely audible. The third stanza describes the nightingale's life. At night they sing to men; and all through the daytime they dream in the woods.

L. 14 dark nocturnal secret: a song of mysterious beauty sung by night.

Ll. 17—18. the innumerable choir of day welcome the dawn: all other birds sing at sunrise in a mood of gladness.

XXX

WAR SONG OF THE SARACENS

James Elroy Flecker was born in 1884, and died in 1915. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1916, his beautiful play *Hassan*, from which this Song is taken, in 1921, and another play, *Don Juan*, in 1925. He was a member of the Consular Service in the East and many of his poems are on Oriental subjects.

The poet is trying to recapture the spirit of ancient Arab fighters. It is interesting to compare the warlike temper of this poem with the completely different outlook expressed in poems describing modern warfare. It is also interesting to inquire how far the Western poet has caught the spirit of the East.

L. 1. Note the rapid rhythm, and the effect of alliteration.

L 2 This refers to the Saracen's raids on rich cities of the West.

L 3 Samet: a very rich material.

Ll. 5-6 Note the rapid effect of the short clauses and the repeated use of the word 'and.' Note also the echoing effect of the internal rhymes—camp . . . lamp.

L. 7. Note the musical effect of these proper names.

L. 8. Rum: stands for modern Turkey which formed part of the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople. The Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453.

L. 11-12. A mart of destruction, etc.: in the markets there was death instead of the ordinary market produce. Instead of the shopkeepers selling goods there were soldiers with their swords bringing ruin.

L. 13. the Spear was a Desert Physician: men who died from spear wounds no longer suffered from ambition; the spear is compared to a doctor who cures them of this evil passion.

L. 17 sheered: rose.

XXXI

A BALLAD OF SIR PERTAB SINGH

Sir Henry Newbolt, born in 1862, was educated at Oxford, became a barrister at Lincoln's Inn, and practised law until 1899. He was editor of the *Monthly Review* from 1900 to 1904. He is best known for his sea poetry, which includes such poems as *Admirals All*, *Songs of the Sea*, and *Songs of the Fleet*. Besides his stirring and virile work in verse, he is also the author of various essays and studies and some collections of historical tales.

Sir Pertab Singh, son of Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur, was born in 1845. A descendant of the Suryawanshi Rathores, he was a flower of Rajput chivalry, "a sportsman to his finger-tips, a gallant soldier, and a real gentleman". During his long career he was three times Regent of Jodhpur, and from 1902 to 1911 the Ruler of Idar. He visited England four times, and served during the Great War of 1914 to 1918. He died in 1922.

The incident described in this poem took place in January 1897, when Lieutenant James Dalnath Cadell, a young soldier of the Central India Horse, died of typhoid at Jodhpur. The story of how Sir Pratap, true to himself, placed brotherhood before caste, was written by the father Colonel T. Cadell, V. C., for *The Times*.

An alternative title for this poem is "A Soldier's Faith"

L. 3. the Rose-red House: Sir Pratap Singh's house, made of stone of the colour of a red rose
 L. 19. The Shadow: Death
 L. 39. That which you lose to-day: caste
 L. 42. That which I lose to-day: a friend

XXXII

SEA-FEVER.

John Masefield was born in 1874 and succeeded Robert Bridges as Poet Laureate in 1930. He is a writer of plays and novels, in addition to poetry. He has written much of the sea and seafaring men, of the countryside, of humble folk and their troubles, of sinners and their redemption. His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1923.

This poem expresses the desires of a strong, vigorous man who wishes to escape from the conventions of town life into the freedom of wide spaces. He is not afraid of hardship. All he asks is brave, happy companions and the deep refreshing sleep which is the reward of physical exertion.

L. 1. In these very simple words the poet makes us feel a sense of great space.

L. 3. kick: a metaphor suggesting the uneven motion of his steering-wheel.

L. 3-4. Note the swaying rhythm of these lines the effect of the double rhymes and alliteration

L. 5 He feels impelled to venture forth upon the sea . . .

L. 7 Note the constant repetition of white or grey details. The poet does not seek blue seas and cloudless skies. He is invigorated by storm . . .

L. 9. gypsy life: gypsies are wanderers on land. Here the word denotes a wandering life at sea.

L. 11. In old English poetry the sea was called 'the whale's path.' This modern poet also thinks of the sea as the home of the wild creatures

The poet does not desire warm, easy weather. It delights him to struggle against keen winds

L. 12 trick: adventure

XXXIII

LAUGH AND BE MERRY

The main idea of this poem is that we should rejoice in the good things of earth and meet all chances with brave optimism.

L. 2. the world with a blow etc.: a metaphor signifying a direct attack upon evil.

L. 3. a thread: man's short life is compared to a thread only nine inches long. This is an allusion to the Greek conception of the Fates—three goddesses who spun and cut the thread of each man's life.

L. 4. the old proud pageant of man: be proud to belong to the history of the human race which unfolds itself like a theatrical exhibition.

L. 7. A metaphor suggesting joy and exhilaration.

Ll. 9-10. We must rejoice in Nature, just as if the sky were a cup of wine, and the stars a triumphal chorus at some great festival.

L. 11. the wine outpoured: a symbol of great joy.

Ll. 13-16 In these lines the earth and its pleasures are compared to an inn where we are living for a short time, enjoying the dancing and music and games.

L. 15. Guesting: living as guests.

L. 16 the game: i.e., the game of life

XXXIV

TARTARY

Walter de la Mare was born in 1873. His *Songs of Childhood* (1902) showed the public that "he had a direct vision of childhood." This does not mean that his philosophy is childish or that he is merely a children's poet. Though his vision is that of a child, "his imagination and intellect are always fully adult." There is a curious dream-like, distant charm in his verse; his world is that of fancies and fairies and moonlight and elves.

L. 1. Tartary: at one time figured prominently in world history. The Tartar, Turk, or Saracen was the hero of many romances, and the country had a romantic appeal to the West.

L 12. bray: denoting the shrill blast of the trumpet.
 L 18 robe of beads: a robe worked all over with beads of precious stones in various designs.
 L 22. scimitar: a short curved sword
 L 30. trembling lakes: the surface of the water broken into ripples

XXXV

OH, SWEET CONTENT

W. H. Davies was born in 1870. In the *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* and *Later Days* he has related his early hardships and the adventures that he experienced. Of the author's first book of poems, Edward Thomas wrote: "He has been divinely gifted with a power of expression equal to that of any other man of our day." The sincerity and simplicity of his utterance, and the astonishing freshness of his imagery and diction, have secured for him a high place in contemporary poetry.

L 2. shines: makes it shine.
 roughest: even the rugged features of a labourer are rendered beautiful by the joy of sweet content.

L 5. dreams: not in sleep, but when out of sheer joy the mind weaves happy fancies.

L 11. blink: the movements of the bat's wings are thought of as the movement of the eyelids

blind bats: "blind as a bat" is a proverbial expression.

L 12. twitch: the twinkling of the stars, their dancing light, is compared to the quivering of the muscles

XXXVI

LEISURE

The chief idea of this poem is that the man who has no leisure misses the beauties of nature and human love. The same idea is expressed in a more whimsical form by Robert Louis Stevenson in his essay, *An Apology for Idlers*.

L 2 stare: is usually employed with the sense of gazing rudely. Here it denotes a long, unhurried look.

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L. 6 The flowers growing in the stream appear like stars.

L. 9. An instance of Personification. Here the idea of Beauty is represented as a beautiful woman.

Ll. 11-12 The woman first smiles with her eyes, and then the smile spreads to her lips, becoming more expressive.

Ll. 13-14 Note the unified effect of this poem: the impression made by the repetition of phrases, and the neat way it finishes with the last stanza in practically the same terms as the first.

XXXVII

THE QUEEN'S RIVAL

Mrs Sarojini Naidu, born in 1880, is a poetess and ~~carr~~. She expresses in her poems the joy of song and love of bat and the idea of service. In one of her letters to Mr. Arthur Sykes she says: "I am not a poet really, I have a vision and the desire but not the voice. If I could write just one poem full of beauty and the spirit of greatness, I should be exultantly silent for ever, but I sing just as the birds do, and my songs are as ephemeral". She has published three volumes of poetry, *The Golden Threshold* in which this poem appears. *The Bird of Time*, and *The Broken Wings*.

L. 6 lapwing: a bird of the plover family.

L. 16 my dream or day: night or day.

L. 25 Vesper: evening.

L. 40 oriole: a bird with black and yellow plumage.

L. 47 fay: fairy.

L. 50 fillet: a band worn round the head.

XXXVIII

ECSTASY

L. 4 paean: songs of praise or triumph.

L. 7. sumptuous peacocks: sumptuous because of gorgeous colour.

L. 9 life's exquisite chorus: the enchanting Nature in spring time.

Appendix A

THE METRES OF ENGLISH POETRY

Some definitions

(i) **Rhythm:** All natural movement tends to become regular. There is normally a period of action followed by a period of rest. Stress and then a pause. This regular movement is called *rhythm*. Breathing, walking, swimming, are all rhythmical. Poetry differs from prose in having a fixed rhythm.

(ii) **Accent or stress:** Certain words or syllables have greater importance or weight than others. These are said to be *stressed* or *accented*. These beats of sound are separated from each other by intervals of equal duration. Thus all strictly rhythmical utterances can be divided into sections of equal time-length.

(iii) **Metre:** The length of the interval between two stresses, and the number of beats in a line, constitute the *Metre* or *Measure* of a poem.

(iv) **Foot:** This is the unit of the metre, i.e., a group of two or three syllables, one of which is stressed.

A verse composition is divided into metrical units, *lines* or *verses*, of fixed length. The length is measured by the number of rhythmical units in the line. Verse, therefore, may be described as stating —

- (i) the number of measures or *feet* which it comprises,
- (ii) the nature of the feet which are predominant.

Verses of two, three, four, five, six, seven feet are called *dimeter*, *trimeter*, *tetrameter*, *pentameter*, *hexameter* and *heptameter*. The chief English feet are:

- (i) **Iamb:** an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, e.g.,

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day

- (ii) **Trochee:** a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one, e.g.,

Hail to thee blithe spirit

✓ (iii) Anapaest: two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed, e.g.,
 We are they who come ~~faster~~^v than fate:
 (iv) Dactyl: one stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables, e.g.,
 Make no deep structures.

By far the largest amount, if not the whole, of English poetry, conforms to one or other of these four classes of feet.

Verse Types: In the writing of verse, lines are combined into larger structural units or groups. When these units are recurrent and similar in structure they are called *Stanzas*. The means of binding together verses into stanzas is *Rime*, which may be defined as the likeness between the vowel sounds in the last metricaly stressed syllables of two or more lines, e.g., meat meet are not rhymes, but meat . . . seat are.

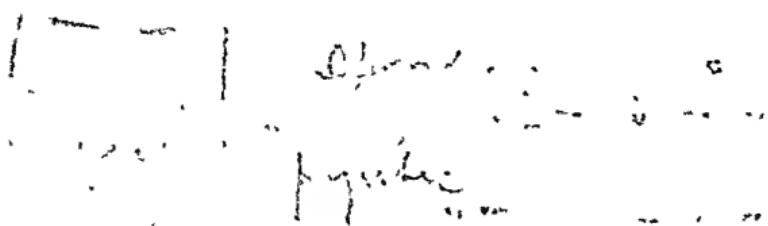
Stanzas may also be marked off by means of a *Refrain*: the same phrase or verse recurring after a certain number of lines, e.g., the Refrain in

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind."

Groups of two rimed lines are called *Couplets*, and the most important Couplet-metre is the Iambic pentameter, where the couplets are known as *Heroic Couplets*.

Groups of four lines are known as *quatrains*, and if and when these lines are heroic and rime alternately then they are known as *Heroic quatrains* or *Elegiac stanzas*, e.g., Gray's *Elegy*. The *Sonnet* is a stanza of fourteen deca-syllabic lines.

Blank verse, literally, is a term applied to all unrimed verse, but is usually restricted to unrimed verse written in Iambic pentameter.



Appendix B

FORMS OF POETRY

Poetry may broadly be divided into two classes: subjective or personal, and objective or impersonal. When verse is used by the poet for the purpose of expressing his personal feelings, whether of intense joy, bitter sorrow, deep passion or tender regret, he is said to write a subjective poem, and when such a poem turns on some *single* thought, feeling or situation, it is termed a *lyric*. Thus a lyric must satisfy three essential conditions—those of (i) unity of impression, (ii) brevity, and (iii) personal emotion.

Normally the lyric passes through four phrases:—

- (i) A description of the object which occasions the emotion.
- (ii) A statement or implication of the emotion aroused.
- (iii) Meditation while the emotion is restrained
- (iv) A brief and summary expression of the final mood.

Lyric poetry is of four kinds: (1) the Song, (2) the Sonnet, (3) the Ode, (4) the Elegy

The Song: A song is the least formal of all. It is brief and rapid in movement, because of lack of reflection. It suits any mood, e.g., Wordsworth's "Rainbow."

The Ode: This is more grave and elevated than the song, usually longer, slower in movement, more elaborate in structure. Inspired by intense emotion, it endeavours to create a noble and sublime mood by the contemplation of the beautiful, the heroic or the God-like. It is elastic in form. The line-length and stanza-form vary at the poet's discretion, or a strict parallelism of line and stanza may be maintained, e.g., Keats's *Ode*, Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters*

The Elegy: This is a lamentation of, or meditation upon, death; or it may be a record of a general sense of pathetic misery. It is sometimes given a pastoral form—the poet and his departed friend are represented as shepherds; ideal scenery forms the background and the spirits of the hills, streams and woods are made to share the poet's grief, e.g., Gray's *Elegy*, Milton's *Lycidas*.

The Sonnet: When the thought is so passionate and intense as to demand a strict form in order that it may be perfectly coherent, this verse-form is chosen. The rigid limitation of length compels the poet to keep an unruly idea well within bounds. Thus it is short, complete in itself, with a definite length and metre, viz., fourteen iambic pentameter lines. There are usually two schemes of rim arrangements.

(i) **The Regular, Italian, or Petrarchan Sonnet:**

The poem is divided into two at the end of the eighth line. The first part of eight lines, called the *Octave*, has always two times arranged in the same order. The thought, mood or sentiment of the poem is presented in this first part. The second part, called the *Sextet*, devotes the remaining six lines to developing and bringing to a conclusion the situation or problem stated in the earlier part.

(ii) **The Shakespearean or the English Sonnet:**

This abandons the time-scheme and thought-division of the Italian; it consists of three quatrains, each rhyming alternately on two sounds, and a final couplet. The three quatrains present the situation, while the couplet brings it to an epigrammatic close.

The objective or impersonal class of poetry is mainly concerned with relating an incident or describing a scene. It is not primarily concerned with the poet's own feelings. This includes the Epic, Narrative poems, Romances, the Drama, the Ballad. Of all these, and of all verse-forms, the *ballad* is the first and the oldest. It is a simple artless tale of daring exploits and marvellous escapes. It gives a whiff of the open air, and tells of a time when life was rude and unrestrained. It has three chief elements—speech, song and action. It is commonly written in alternative lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter, e.g., "A ballad of Sir Pertab Singh"